Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

Do you support the continued operation of public radio station KRNM in the CNMI?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

INSIDE

Stagflation Fears
Economists call it "stagflation," and they're worried it might be coming back.
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Growing the Russian market

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Last of a two-part series

SPECIAL Report

If the CNMI plays its cards right, tourist numbers from Russian will continue to grow as more and more people from the former Soviet republic look to spend their precious rubbles on vacations.

And for Vladivostok Air se-

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Study says CNMI middle-schoolers sub-par in math

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
Rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Regional Educational Laboratory at Pacific Resources for Education and Learning reported Tuesday that student achievement in middle school mathematics in the CNMI is below the national average.

ON THE NET

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2008043.pdf

According to a data study conducted by the PREL researchers Roger Chesswas, PhD, and Lesley Lee, PhD, "student achievement in mathematics is lower in the CNMI and in the Pacific Region than in most parts of the U.S.

The CNMI assesses mathematics achievement in either seventh or eighth grade—or both.

The study tried to obtain answers to the question: What is

See STUDY on Page 4

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Japanese and local journalists scramble to get close-up shots of the 60-year-old murder suspect, Kazuyoshi Miura, who was escorted by Department of Corrections and police officers after his hearing inside the CNMI Superior Court in Susupe Wednesday.

Miura told to hire own lawyer

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman ordered Japanese businessman Kazuyoshi Miura yesterday to hire his own lawyer.

Wiseman told the 60-year-old Miura that, based on the assessment conducted by the Adult Probation Office, he is not qualified to get a court-appointed counsel to represent him in the case.

After Wiseman announced his decision, assistant public

See MIURA on Page 4

PTI acquires IT&E

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

CNMI-based Pacific Telecom Inc. has bought Guam telecommunication firm IT&E for an undisclosed sum in a transaction that makes PTI the largest telecommunications company in the Marianas.

PTI's Guam subsidiary signed the asset purchase agreement yesterday with IT&E, transferring selected assets and the IT&E brand name to PTI Pacifica, Inc.

The company will continue to operate as IT&E and PTI assures that current customers will

See PTI on Page 4

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, John A. Santos, IT&E executive vice president for Operations; Joseph J. Perez, IT&E executive vice president and general manager; John M. Borlas, IT&E president; Amando C. Santiago, IT&E senior vice president, Finance and Administration; Jose D. Perez, IT&E chairman; Ricardo C. Delgado, PTI chairman; Jose Ricardo Delgado, PTI president and CEO; Rick Umeda, Sumitomo senior manager; and Larry P. Knecht, PTI vice president and CFO.

Local

Protest filed vs NMC choice for new director

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A job applicant has accused the Northern Marianas College of biased hiring practices after NMC picked another candidate over him for a management position.

John Gonzales, an employee at the Department of Public Lands and host of a local television talk show, filed the complaint against NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez on Monday.

"I am hereby filing an official grievance against Carmen Fernandez and NMC for its (sic) unfair, arbitrarily capricious, biased, partial, and subjective employment practices regarding the position of director for Office of Institutional Effectiveness," Gonzales told acting NMC chairman Joey P. San Nicolas.

The job has been offered to Wil Castro, chief planner at the Guam Public School System. Castro will serve a three-year contract and will get up to $60,000 a year.

Gonzales said he submitted his application for the position on Jan. 22 to the NMC Human Resources Office. After two days, he was told that Fernandez "was not enthused about my application and directed that my application be 'filed.'"

He questioned the procedure NMC followed for deciding whom to hire. He said an official committee should have been created to review the qualifications and interview the applications.

He said he was shocked by the college's decision to hire someone from off-island whom he described as "a certain prior associate of Carmen, a Guamanian." He also expressed outrage over a statement by NMC board spokesperson Mark Mendiola that the college was getting a good deal from being able to hire Wil Castro at $60,000 annually to do a job that normally pays $100,000 in Guam.

"They make it sound like there is just no NMI native qualified for said position. How much more demeaning and condescending can this be? How insulting is this to us from the NMI, implying that there is really no Rotanese, Tinianese, or Saipanese qualified enough with unquestionable local loyalty to take on this position, get immediately trained, and swiftly address pending accreditation institutional effectiveness matters?" Gonzeles said.

When asked for her comment, Fernandez said the standard hiring process for the position has been "strictly adhered to."

"We believe that we selected the best qualified individual to meet the college's immediate and long-term needs. The NMC Human Resources Office will be addressing Mr. Gonzales' concerns in a timely manner," she said.

The college is currently on the verge of losing its accreditation. It has been given only a few months to comply with the requirements of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.

The accrediting commission has identified the position of director of institutional effectiveness as one of the critical posts that the college must fill immediately.

CNMI DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH
MARCH 2008 ACTIVITIES

SUCCESS
When doors open-
We succeed.

March 3rd, 2008

1. **Normal Parenting Issues**
   Presenter(s): Dr. Willi Gutowski
   Venue: Aqua Resort, Saipan
   Time: 8:30am - 10:00am
2. **Common Childhood Disorders**
   Presenter(s): Dr. Willi Gutowski
   Venue: Aqua Resort, Saipan
   Time: 10:00am - 11:30am

*****Lunch will be provided *****
Note: Please call the CNMI Council on DD at 664-7000 to register. Seating is Limited

March 5th, 2008

1. **Person First Language**
   Presenter(s): Melena A. Slaven, M.A.
   Venue: Tinian Dynasty Hotel
   Time: 8:30am - 11:00am

*****Lunch will be provided *****
2. **Resiliency**
   Presenter(s): Melena A. Slaven, M.A.
   Venue: Tinian Dynasty Hotel
   Time: 12:00pm - 2:00pm
3. **Child Care Services & Licensing-DC & CA**
   Presenter(s): Maribel Loste & Virginia N. Mahora
   Venue: Tinian Dynasty Hotel
   Time: 2:00pm - 3:30pm

Note: Please call the CNMI Council on DD at 664-7000 to register. Seating is Limited

March 6th, 2008

1. **Self-Advocacy—Discrimination**
   Presenter(s): NMPASI: Greg Borja & Tom Thornburg
   Venue: Tinian Dynasty Hotel
   Time: 8:30am - 11:30am

*****Lunch will be provided *****
2a. **13 Developmental Disabilities**
2b. **Career Assessment for People with Developmental Disabilities**
2c. **What is UCEDD?**
2d. **What is Section 504?**
   Presenter(s): NMC-UCEDD: Carol Hosono & John Manalo
   Venue: Tinian Dynasty Hotel
   Time: 1:00pm—3:00pm

Note: Please call the CNMI Council on DD at 664-7000 to register. Seating is Limited

March 7th, 2008

1. **Outreach Survey at Tinian Elementary, Junior-High School**
   Conducted by: CNMI Council on DD,
   Family Hope Center, CNMI Assistive Technology Program, NMC-UCEDD, and NMPASI
2. **Outreach Survey in the Community/Family Home Visit**
   Conducted by: CNMI Council on DD,
   Family Hope Center, CNMI Assistive Technology Program, NMC-UCEDD, and NMPASI

March 8th, 2008

1. **BUDDY Walk**
   Sponsored by: CNMI Association of Families with Disabilities, CNMI Cancer Association, & First Lady's Vision
   Venue: Taga Beach, San Jose Tinian
   Time: 5:30am – 9:00am
2. **Family Picnic**
   Sponsored by: CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities & Family Hope Center
   Venue: Taga Beach, Tinian
   Time: 9:00am – 2:00pm

March 10th, 2008

CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities "Open House"
Building No. 1310 and 1312
Anatahan Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan
Time: 8:00am – 4:00pm

March 12th, 2008

1. **Outreach Survey at Rota Elementary, Junior-High School**
   Conducted by: CNMI Council on DD,
   Family Hope Center, CNMI Assistive Technology Program, & NMC-UCEDD
2. **Outreach Survey in the Community/Family Home Visit**
   Conducted by: CNMI Council on DD,
   Family Hope Center, CNMI Assistive Technology Program, & NMC-UCEDD

March 13th, 2008

1. **Self-Advocacy—Discrimination**
   Presenter(s): NMPASI: Greg Borja & Tom Thornburg
   Venue: As Paris Restaurant, Rota
   Time: 8:30am - 11:30am

*****Lunch will be provided *****
2a. **13 Developmental Disabilities**
2b. **Career Assessment for People with Developmental Disabilities**
2c. **What is UCEDD?**
2d. **What is Section 504?**
   Presenter(s): NMC-UCEDD: Carol Hosono & John Manalo
   Venue: As Paris Restaurant, Rota
   Time: 1:00pm—3:00pm

Note: Please call the CNMI Council on DD at 664-7000 to register. Seating is Limited

March 14th, 2008

1. **Person First Language**
   Presenter(s): Melena A. Slaven, M.A.
   Venue: As Paris Restaurant, Rota
   Time: 8:30am - 11:00am

*****Lunch will be provided *****
2. **Resiliency**
   Presenter(s): Melena A. Slaven, M.A.
   Venue: As Paris Restaurant, Rota
   Time: 12:00pm - 2:00pm

Note: Please call the CNMI Council on DD at 664-7000 to register. Seating is Limited

March 15th, 2008

1. **BUDDY Walk**
   Sponsored by: CNMI Association of Families with Disabilities, CNMI Cancer Association, & First Lady's Vision
   Venue: Pinatang Park to Round House, Rota
   Time: 5:30am – 9:00am
2. **Family Picnic**
   Sponsored by: CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities & Family Hope Center
   Venue: Round House, Songsong, Rota
   Time: 9:00am – 2:00pm

March 18th, 2008

Self-Advocacy Skills & Resources
Presenter(s): NMPASI: Greg Borja & Tom Thornburg
Venue: Aqua Resort, Saipan
Time: 8:30am - 4:00pm

*****Lunch will be provided *****
Note: Please call the CNMI Council on DD at 664-7000 to register. Seating is Limited

March 26th, 2008

2nd Annual Family Forum & CNMI Service Providers Exhibits
*** For Families & Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities.**
Venue: Saipan World Resort
Time: 8:30am - 4:00pm

*****Lunch will be provided *****
Note: Please call the CNMI Council on DD at 664-7000 to register. Seating is Limited

March 29th, 2008

1. **BUDDY Walk (Free Vital Sign & Accu Check Screening)**
   Sponsored by: CNMI Association of Families with Disabilities, CNMI Cancer Association, First Lady's Vision, NMC Nursing Club.
   Venue: Garapan Boat Basin (across from Kristo Rai Church, Saipan)
   Time: 6:00am - 8:00am

RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
Korea Kitefliers Association president Kitai Rhee and director Hakwon Kim demonstrate how to fly a kite at the American Memorial Park.

ATC FACTORY SALE

- Lot 027 D 01, Navy Hill Road, Navy Hill, Saipan
- Approximately 7,000 sqm
- Utilities at site
- Fire damaged concrete and semi-concrete buildings on site to be sold "AS IS"
- Prepaid 55-year lease with expiration of June 1, 2047
- Sale price subject to Bankruptcy Court approval and overbid procedures
- Seller has accepted a purchase offer of $130,000, subject to the Bankruptcy Court approval and overbid procedures. Seller has filed a motion with the Bankruptcy Court to obtain such approval, which will be heard on Thursday, March 20, 2008, at 8:30 a.m. In the interim, other interested buyers may submit a scaled written overbid to the Clerk of the United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands Court (designated "Overbid for ATC Factory") or make such overbid at the hearing. To be valid, any overbid must be for an amount at least 10% more than the highest purchase offer amount, with the buyer willing to pay all of the closing costs and 10% of the purchase offer amount in cash or certified check at the time of the offer.

Free kite-making workshop

Two champion kite flyers from South Korea will be conducting free kite-making workshops this week under the auspices of the Brilliant Star School of Saipan.

Korea Kitefliers Association president Kitai Rhee and director Hakwon Kim will conduct the first workshop today, Thursday, Feb. 28, while the next one will be held tomorrow, Friday, Feb. 29, 2008, at the Brilliant Star School on Navy Hill.

The workshop will be a one-hour-and-a-half session from 4pm to 5:30pm on both days.

The workshop is FREE! All you have to do is attend and learn how to make a kite with your family and friends. If you do not have any materials to use for the workshop, there will be Kite Kits for sale at reasonable prices.

The workshop is open to the public, so spread the word about this latest gimmick at Brilliant Star and let's all have fun in the workshop! ***(PR)***

Senator wants wage hikes implemented

By AGNES E. DONATO
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REPORTER

A local senator is urging the U.S. Congress to defy calls by the private sector and apply the scheduled increases in the minimum wage.

Sen. Maria Frica T. Pangelinan, in a written testimony to a U.S. Senate committee, said the wage hikes will benefit the local economy.

"I support the current law as enacted, mandating incremental increases in the minimum wage of the CNMI. I oppose any delay," said Pangelinan.

She described her testimony "as a voice for those who have not been heard, those who are earning the minimum wage and cannot be present" at the wage hearing in Washington, D.C. today.

Pangelinan began her argument by questioning the credibility of the impact study report issued by the U.S. Department of Labor, which projected that the wage hikes would harm the economy, result in job loss, and ultimately compel workers to leave the islands.

The senator pointed out that the Labor Department admitted to the lack of data to assess the current and future impact of the recent and scheduled wage increases. She added that minimum wage earners were excluded in the study.

The minimum wage must increase for local citizens to be able to remain in the Commonwealth, Pangelinan added. Due to the government's dwindling revenue, many local residents are losing their jobs in the public sector. They must either find employment in the private sector, or leave for Guam or the 50 states. Because wages are low, most citizens opt to leave the islands than work for local businesses.

Pangelinan also expressed high hopes that the Commonwealth's economy will recover, citing new tourism markets and the economic benefits of the military buildup in Guam.

Finally, she said that CNMI citizens simply need the minimum wage to increase.

"I ask the good people of this committee to consider that the wage increase we are discussing is from $3.55 to $4.05 per hour. Neither, after taxes, will buy a single gallon of gas," Pangelinan said.

She added, "The majority of our elected officials have, to date, been unable or unwilling to address the issue of a realistic minimum wage level, even during the economic boom of the 1990s. Despite the sincere efforts of a few individuals, who were willing to stand up to political pressure exerted by private sector employers, the minimum wage has remained unchanged until the recent passage of the federal law under discussion today. The people of the Commonwealth are now looking to the U.S. Congress to hold to their course, not delay further increases, and finally bring some equity to this situation."

The U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources will hold a wage hearing at 9:30am in Washington, D.C. (11:30 tonight on Saipan)

Two of the five invited witnesses are from the CNMI—Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and Resident Rep. Pete A. Tenorio. Both are expected to speak against further wage increases.

Jim Arenovski, president of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, and Lynn M. Knight, chairwoman of the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, flew to the nation's capital at their own expense to lobby Congress against the wage increases.

The minimum wage rates applicable to American Samoa and the CNMI were increased 50 cents an hour on July 24 and July 25, 2007, respectively. Minimum wages in both jurisdictions will increase annually by 50 cents until they reach the federal minimum wage of $7.25 an hour.

For the CNMI, the minimum wage was increased to 50 cents an hour to $3.55 on July 25, 2007, and will rise to $7.25 an hour by 2015.

For American Samoa, current minimum wages vary by industry, with the most significant being the minimum wage for the tuna canning industry, which is currently $3.76 an hour, reflecting the initial 50-cent increase on July 24, 2007. The minimum wage for American Samoa will increase across the board to $7.25 an hour by 2014.

Lawmakers want tighter rules vs 'double-dipping'

Two lawmakers have proposed to further limit the retirees who can return to government service.

A bill introduced by Representatives Joseph N. Camacho and Joseph C. Reyes seeks to repeal a law allowing retirees to work in government as teachers, attorneys, nurses and doctors, and auditors.

The bill's sponsors say the current law allows too many retirees to "double dip" when the government can hire younger employees at a lower cost. And by allowing retirees to work in the public sector, the law causes unjustifiable strain on the pension program.

"The provision of younger less-costly employees into the system will reduce the current population outflux of Commonwealth youth, help stabilize the financially challenged Retirement System, while allow for the necessary cabinet-level expertise to be utilized by the commonwealth's governors," states the bill.

If this bill is enacted, a retiree may only work in government as a Cabinet member, an elected official, or a Title V employee under the federal Older Americans Act. ***(Agnes E. Donato)***

Foundation donates $8K for new classroom in RP

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

The Filipino Community Foundation Simbang Gabi Committee turned over a generous $8,000 check donation to build a second classroom building at the Labnig Elementary School in Malinao, Albay.

Philippine Consul General Wilfredo DL. Maximo expressed sincere gratitude as he received the check on behalf of the Philippine government.

The foundation's generosity, Maximo said, "is a manifestation of the Filipino *bayanihan* [communal] spirit and OFW's [overseas Filipino workers] philanthropy."

Foundation president Maribel Loste said her late father Nicolas Loste would have been proud of the group's accomplishment. Nicolas Loste had also served as foundation president.

Danilo I. Domingo, dhairman of the Simbang Gabi Committee, said he is thankful to the Mount Carmel Cathedral and all the Simbang Gabi nine-day coordinators and the Filipino community on Saipan "for their hard work and contributions."

Typhoon Reming struck the Albay area in late 2006, killing 146 people. The typhoon had also left the province in shambles.

The Labnig Elementary School was on the list of schools in the Bicol region that was in most need of classroom donations. The list was endorsed by Department of Labor and Employment undersecretary Danilo P. Cruz last year.

In 2005, the Simbang Gabi Committee donated funds for the construction of a two-classroom building at Lalawigan Central Elementary School, Borongan, Eastern Samar.

Palms Resort Saipan
Sunday Brunch
March 2nd, 2008 11:00 am - 2:00 pm
Palms Resort Saipan
@ fresko
Special "Live" Performance
by The Saipan Community School
18-piece Advanced Band
(6th, 7th and 8th graders)
$20.00 Adult
$15.00 Child
(4-11 years old)
20% Local Discount Applicable
$15.00 Senior Citizen
Local Discount Not Applicable
FREE POOL PASS
ALL YOU CAN DRINK CHAMPAGNE!!
For reservation, call 670-322-3311
Wi-Fi (Wireless Internet Connection) is now Available!
Wi-Fi is available @ fresko Restaurant,
Coral Reef Lounge and the Lobby area.

GROWING

From Page 1

nior manager for administration and operations (Japan and USA) Roman Gregoriev, the islands are already doing a superb job in luring and accommodating tourists from Russia and hopes that future travel requirements to the CNMI would not differ that much from the current Visitor Entry Permit.

"Personally, I think the CNMI does everything right. To increase the number of passengers you should keep at least same visa-rules for Russians, have FAM trips from as many areas of Russia as possible not only for travel agencies but for Russian media, and maybe concentrate on tourists with children," he said in an e-mail to the *Saipan Tribune*.

Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan Russian sales manager Tatiana Babauta shares Gregoriev's concerns about how the federalization of the Commonwealth's immigration would affect requirements for Russians tourists.

Babauta, who also serves as chairwoman of the Marianas Visitors Authority's Russia Ad Hoc Committee, said the Russian market has great potential, with a population of about 165 million and a middle class that is growing by the day.

This was seconded by Marianas Resort and Spa Russian market supervisor Elena Deets when she said that, "Russia is a very big country and we [Marianas Resort] would like to accommodate more and more tourists."

Vladivostok Air eyes charter flights

Proof that MVA's marketing efforts in the country is working is the fact that two more charter flights are bring planned by Vladivostok Air in April and May, according to Gregoriev.

"We have request from Russian local travel agencies to operate two charters (one group) from Vladivostok to Saipan on April 30, 2008, and back on May 10, 2008. But it's not been confirmed 100 percent yet by the Russian side," he said.

The flights will use a Russian Tupolev TU204-300 or Airbus A-320.

Gregoriev said his company is serious about operating charter flights to Saipan. He said they could operate as many flights as necessary; however, it all depends on demand from Russian tourists and travel agencies.

While he has championed the CNMI as an ideal destination for Russians looking for a respite from Father Winter, he has heard one negative critique of Saipan from one of the Russian tourists that recently visited the island.

"Thailand doesn't have a good reputation [among Russians] because of its sex industry, especially for couples and families with children. But Saipan is a really good place for them. That is why some Russians were really disappointed when they found a lot of strange massage-lounges in Garapan," he said.

Impact

Hyatt Regency Saipan marketing and sales director Ken Kaku said that, despite ranking fourth behind the hotel's main markets, Russian tourists have already impacted the international hotel chain and Garapan landmark.

"Geographically, the Russian market comes fourth after Japan, U.S., and Korea. As for January 2008, room nights have increased by 141 percent and room revenue has increased by 150 percent compared to January 2007," Kaku said.

The sales and marketing official, however, added that MVA still needs to improve its relationship with Russian-based airlines if it hopes to further grow the market in the future.

"The majority of tourists are still coming via Asiana Airlines because of flexible schedule, reasonable airfare, and good quality of service. Travel agents also find it easy to sell it rather than fixed charter flights which are rather expensive. But we need to establish a fundamental working relationship with both DalAvia Airlines and Vladivostok Airlines and of course we need a scheduled flight in the future which is our main objective."

MVA Russia marketing staff Leng Bai admitted the need for a better working relationship with Vladivostok Air and DalAvia Airlines.

"Currently we do not have any tie-ups with Russian airlines. The charter flights were through the efforts of the travel agent and FAM tours that MVA and its members hosted throughout the year and also through the advertisements placed in different cities in Russia by MVA," he said.

Pacific Islands Club Saipan Russian market manager Elly Stoilova, meanwhile, could not overemphasize the market's value to the San Antonio resort and said they expect bigger and better things from Russia in the coming years.

"The Russian market is important to PIC since we first went to Khabarovsk on the inaugural trip back in November 1996. We've been in the market for 12 years now and see the progress with more guests and direct charters. We advertise online on Russian travel sites, advertise in newspapers and magazines, and invite media to the property. For the next year, we expect growth from Russia due to the increase in flights from Asiana as well as talks of more direct charters later this year," she said.

PTI

From Page 1

experience a seamless transition after the purchase is final. The company expects the deal to close in three to six months.

The financial details of the agreement were not disclosed by both parties.

"This is a winning combination for Micronesia. IT&E is a strong, locally owned company, which has been a pioneer in Guam for decades. IT&E's history coupled with PTI's own, as part of Verizon in the CNMI, bring new and exciting possibilities to our customers, employees, and business partners," said PTI president and CEO Ricky Delgado.

"IT&E employees are extremely knowledgeable and have a great deal of experience in the technical, IT, sales and customer services areas, and we look forward to working with them as we expand our product offerings," he added.

The purchase will combine IT&E's cellular, long distance, Internet, and business phone and data solutions in Guam and the CNMI with PTI, the leading telecommunications company in the CNMI, which also provides CDMA and GSM cellular, long distance, data communications, and fixed line services to the residents of the CNMI.

PTI provides data communications and long distance services in Guam and publishes *The CNMI Phone Book and The Guam Phone Book*. This month PTI added CNMI-wide Push-to-Talk service to their product portfolio.

"To be the leader means continuously providing customers with the most reliable, cost-effective, and modern network. We have done just that in the CNMI, and we will follow the same recipe as we expand into Guam," said Delgado.

He added that PTI is planning to plunk down $10 million in Guam in the next two years, adding to the over $10 million the company has invested in the region over the last two and a half years.

IT&E president John M. Borlas said the sale of the company he, Jose D. Perez, and Jaime F. Tuquero founded in 1979 is bittersweet.

However, he said he is at ease handing over the reigns of IT&E to the very capable hands of Delgado and PTI.

"I've entrusted the IT&E legacy to PTI and is comfortable turning the company over to a group with the same values and a long-term commitment to the region. Sumitomo's sizeable investment in PTI as a strategic partner clearly is an indication of the confidence it placed on the company.

"Assuredly, this is a significant factor that played a huge role in our decision to consider PTI, particularly coming from Sumitomo who is one of the largest corporations in Japan."

Borlas added that the recent spate of mergers in the region's telecommunications industry also weighed heavily in his decision to accede to the courtship of PTI.

"It was a good fit for PTI and IT&E since geographically there is not a great deal of overlap between the companies. The combined strength of PTI, Sumitomo, and now together with IT&E, is undeniably a superb ingredient poised for success in promoting positive and robust growth for our civilian and military communities. Customers can expect to enjoy newer next generation technologies of products to become immediately more accessible as may be typically seen in Japan, Singapore, and other highly developed countries," he said.

Once the transaction is complete, PTI will be the largest telecommunications company in the Marianas with over 75,000 total subscribers on four islands. The combined infrastructure and assets will allow PTI to offer the latest technology as well as a wider range of products and services to its customers in Guam and the CNMI. Plans include a complete upgrade of the CDMA wireless platform in Guam, an expansion of the GSM platform in Guam, and the completion of a redundant microwave backbone throughout Guam, Rota, Tinian, and Saipan.

PTI was purchased from Verizon by Prospector Holdings Inc. of the Philippine-based Delgado family in September of 2005. In 2006, Sumitomo Corporation invested $25 million into PTI as a long-term strategic partner. Together both companies continue to work closely to expand PTI with a long-term regional orientation in mind.

MIURA

From Page 1

defenders Richard Miller and Malik Edwards, who sat beside Miura, simultaneously stood up and thanked the judge.

The judge said that, based on interviews with Miura and his wife, the Adult Probation Office had determined that the couple have enough assets to pay for their own attorney.

Wiseman said he is going to ask the Department of Corrections to allow Miura to use a telephone to contact a lawyer for his defense.

Wiseman also granted assistant attorney general Kevin Lynch's request to hold a status conference on Monday at 11am.

The judge hopes that Miura will already have a lawyer by then and the hearing schedule may be discussed at that time.

Wiseman explained that the government is concerned that the scheduled May 5 and 10 preliminary hearing and arraignment may not fall on those dates because it is a unique case.

"It's an extradition, not a regular criminal case," he pointed out.

Lynch asked the court to set a status conference because extradition cases have very different procedures than regular criminal cases.

Lynch told *Saipan Tribune* that regular criminal cases go through preliminary examination and arraignment and then pre-trial proceedings and eventually trial or plea.

"In extradition you don't have all those proceedings. So what we need to do is be able to get together with the court with the opposing counsel and figure out the schedule for what will happen in this case because it is outside of the usual criminal case," he said.

"Somebody is not charged with and convicted in the Commonwealth for being a fugitive from justice. It is just a way of getting the case into our court systems so that we can adjudicate the issues of whether they can be extradited," he said.

The Attorney General's Office filed an extradition complaint against Miura yesterday.

As to the information filed by AGO on Monday charging Miura with fugitive from justice, Lynch explained that the extradition complaint is only amended.

"It doesn't change the substance, only the title," Lynch said, adding that an extradition is not a criminal charge.

He said they changed the title so it would conform to the extradition statute.

"The extradition statute talks about the filing of a complaint for extradition so that's why we changed the title so that the document we filed matches with what the statute requires," he added.

Local authorities arrested Miura Friday at the Saipan international airport for the murder of his wife in Los Angeles 27 years ago.

The Superior Court set no bail for his temporary liberty.

Miura had already been convicted in Japan in 1994 of the murder of his wife, Kazumi Miura. The verdict, however, was overturned by Japan's high court 10 years ago.

In filing the murder and conspiracy to commit murder charges in LA court in 1988, the LA Police Department said Miura hatched the plot to kill Kazumi to collect on life insurance policies.

STUDY

From Page 1

the status of student achievement in middle school mathematics in the Pacific region jurisdictions? The study findings provide a portrait of the types of mathematic assessments used in grades 7 and 8, and of the levels at which students are performing. It covered students from Hawaii, American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands

According to the study's authors, analysis of the data suggests that student achievement in middle school mathematics is below the national average, confirming a 2002 U.S. ED study that indicated that student achievement in mathematics is lower in the Pacific region than in most other parts of the U.S.

In the status report, it is indicated that the CNMI SAT-10 mathematics achievement in grade 8 increased from a percentile rank score of 36 percent in 2003/04 to a percentile rank score of 39 percent in 2004/05, but then declined to a percentile rank score of 35 percent in 2005/06. The proficient or advanced percentage was not available.

On the other hand, mathematics achievement in grade 7 did show a slight increase in 2004/05 at 36 percent proficient or advanced and in 2005/06 at 28 percent proficient or advanced. The percentile rank score was not available.

NPR scores range from 1 to 99, where a score at the 50th percentile represents average performance.

Chesswas and Lee found that student achievement data are not uniformly available, and they relied on two main sources of data: the public school system web sites in the Pacific region or structured interviews with key state education agency testing and assessment staff if online data are not available.

They added that the CNMI provided data for the PREL study through the Pacific Educational Data Management System database and the CNMI Public School System web site. However, achievement data and results are incomplete when it comes to middle school mathematics.

Education Commissioner Dr. David Borja said that PREL actually has the PSS' data, "because they are the ones that work with us on the student achievement report for each school year."

"They have been the ones who have been helping us put them together so that is why it was kind of a surprise for us that REL-P said they didn't have it," said Borja

According to PREL, the CNMI, along with other territories of the U.S., are required to report annually on their public school systems.

"While required to satisfy certain aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act, they are not bound by all of its standards or reporting documents," Chesswess and Lee said.

PREL said there are gaps in summaries of findings on mathematics achievement in the region "because of the lack of data and assurances of the data quality."

"More important, for state-developed assessments the technical properties such as reliability and validity estimates and item statistics of the assessments are not known," Chesswess and Lee said.

The two recommended that, if policy makers' desire to understand possible variations in mathematics achievement across the Pacific region is to be addressed, a necessary first condition is to develop more consistent, comparable measures of mathematics achievement across the jurisdictions.

Japanese media told not to act like paparazzi

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman told the visiting Japanese media yesterday that they are welcome to cover court proceedings in the case of Kazuyoshi Miura, but advised them not to act like paparazzi by blocking the officers who are securing the defendant for the hearings.

Wiseman warned that if the journalists interfere with the officers' job, they could be arrested and prosecuted.

"That is the order of the court!" said the judge, whose statement was translated by a Japanese interpreter.

Wiseman's reminder resulted in a smoother transportation of the 60-year-old Miura from the Judicial Complex to the nearby Department of Corrections in Susupe.

Due to the huge number of Japanese media covering the proceeding, about 20 police officers, 10 court marshals and probation officers assisted some 10 Corrections officers in bringing Miura to the court and after the hearing yesterday.

Despite the presence of many officers and the yellow police lines placed in the court's lobby and hallway, there was still a commotion when Miura entered the Judicial Building.

More than 50 photographers, cameramen, and reporters took photographs and TV footages, and asked Miura for comments when Corrections officers and police officers took the defendant from a DOC van in front of the main entrance of the Judicial Building.

After the hearing, Wiseman asked an interpreter to translate his statement for the Japanese media.

Wiseman said he knows that Miura's case is very important to the people of Japan, resulting in the many Japanese media coming to Saipan. "You are all welcome here to attend the proceedings and to also enjoy the beauty of the island," he said.

However, he stressed that there are court procedures to be followed when a defendant is brought to the courthouse.

Wiseman said journalists are free to take photos, footages, and get comments from a defendant. But journalists, he said, are not permitted to prevent the officers from doing their job by blocking their way before and after the hearing.

"That's the paparazzi. You are not allowed to interfere. Again, you are more than welcome, but do not interfere with the officers," the judge said.

The visiting journalists smiled and nodded their heads.

Paparazzi are photographers who take candid photographs of celebrities, usually by relentlessly shadowing them in their public and private activities.

When the officers later brought out Miura from the courtroom, the journalists stayed behind the yellow police lines. They did not block the officers.

Judicial Branch Deputy Marshal 3 Jess Santos said it was his first time to see this kind of media while working at the Superior Court.

Because of what happened during the first hearing on Monday, when the reporters swarmed Miura, Santos said he talked yesterday morning with some police officers, Corrections officers, and even probation officers to help them transport Miura.

"It's just a little rough from entering but coming out it's more smoother because Judge Wiseman informed them about respecting the officers that are going out with the detainee," Santos said.

Santos advised the visiting journalists to follow the local media's style in covering the courts. "What the local media do is that they just mind their own business, they don't block the defendant. Then everything will be okay and smooth," Santos said.

The marshal supervisor hopes that the visiting journalists are already aware of the proper procedure when the next hearing occurs on Monday. "Hopefully we don't have to put all those [yellow] ribbons out. The ribbons make the courthouse look ugly," he added.

At last Monday's hearing, the visiting journalists elbowed one another to get close-up shots of Miura or to ask him for comments as he emerged from the courtroom.

Corrections officers and court marshals who escorted the businessman could hardly squeeze through the hallway as reporters, cameramen, and photographers blocked their way. The officers moved back to the courtroom and used the Judiciary Building's backdoor exit to avoid the media.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ
Japanese media patiently wait inside the CNMI Superior Court in Susupe Wednesday.

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Fitial attends IGIA meeting on Guam buildup

WASHINGTON, DC—An executive session of the Interagency Task Force was held yesterday to discuss federal government-wide support to Guam related to the planned military realignment on the island.

The meeting, co-chaired by the Department of Navy's Joint Guam Program Office and the Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, focused on the efforts to date of federal agencies and the Government of Guam to identify and address resource requirements.

The IGIA meeting was chaired by Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, and was attended by Guam Gov. Felix P. Camacho, CNMI Gov. Benigno Fitial, and American Samoa Gov. Togiola Tulafona.

Rep. Donna Christensen of the Virgin Islands, and Resident Representative Pedro A. Tenorio of the CNMI were also present with Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo and Gov. John P. deJongh Jr. of the Virgin Islands. Rep. Eni Faleomavaega also submitted formal input for the session.

Nikolao Pula, acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Insular Affairs, helped facilitate the meeting and discussion on each action item. Others present were Assistant Secretary of the Navy B.J. Penn and JGPO executive director Maj. Gen. (Ret.) David Bice.

The Task Force's five working group leads—Labor, Health & Human Services, Socio-economic, Environment and Infrastructure—provided updates on their efforts to date, plans for additional efforts, and areas requiring assistance from the federal government and the Government of Guam.

The working groups are composed of representatives from the Government of Guam and staff from Departments of Labor, Homeland Security, State,

Fitial

Agriculture, Health and Human Services, the Environmental Protection Agency, and many other federal agencies. Representatives from the Office of Management and Budget also participate as Task Force members.

"We continue to engage the federal government at the highest levels to encourage their support for Guam as it prepares for the military realignment," said Bice. "Their assistance is essential to address the critical infrastructure and public service issues that Guam has identified in their needs analysis. There are a number of enabling services and infrastructure limitations that need to be resolved in preparation for the surge of construction and sustained military presence so that we can complete the program on schedule, and in a way that is beneficial for the community."

Priority issues being addressed by the Interagency Task Force include the Port of Guam, utilities, roads, environmental studies, immigration and workforce training.

This event was the third in the line of quarterly Task Force meetings. The last, held in November 2007, presented an opportunity for the establishment of a partnership between the Government of Guam, Port Authority of Guam, and the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration to achieve a long-term vision for modernizing the island's port.

Additionally, DoD's Office of Economic Adjustment has provided over $1.5 million in grants to the Government of Guam to conduct assessments, community outreach, and feasibility studies.

"As Secretary Kempthorne mentioned in his opening remarks, we hope to get a good handle on the resources that will be required to support the infrastructure upgrades and other needs 'outside the fence' on Guam," said Pula. "A successful transition and partnership with the people of Guam and the region is in the best interest of the entire United States."

About JGPO

The Joint Guam Program Office facilitates the realignment of Marines from Okinawa to Guam. JGPO works within the Department of Defense and closely with the Government of Japan, Government of Guam, U.S. Congress and Federal agencies to lead and manage the delivery of required capabilities to the Marines. ***(JGPO)***

Kidney specialist signs on for a longer contract

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
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REPORTER

Kidney specialist Dr. Raphael Loutoby will begin his long-term contract with the new Dr. Jose T Villagomez clinic beginning April 2008.

Loutoby, who first arrived in November 2007 as a locum tenen, is a board certified nephrologist from the U.S., according to Public Health Secretary Joseph Kevin P. Villagomez.

"Locum physicians are those that we hire on short-term basis to provide medical coverage while we look to hire on a more long-term basis," said Villagomez.

Loutoby has been providing nephrology coverage in December 2007 and February 2008.

Villagomez said the kidney specialist sees all patients that are undergoing hemodialysis as well as those that are receiving peritoneal dialysis.

"Loutoby holds a clinic to address the needs of those patients that have borderline kidney function [problems] that may need close watching to ensure that they do not progress into complete kidney shutdown," said Villagomez.

In December 2007, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial approved DPH's request to hire a nephrologist or a medical doctor who specializes in kidney problems.

Fitial said the government still has funds to cover Loutoby's salary under the CNMI's continuing resolution budget of $163.5 million.

Loutoby's employment contract is for one year at $250,000.

The kidney specialist has expressed interest in staying on for a longer-term contract.

However, "he needs time to close down his clinic in the US and make arrangement for the move out here," said Villagomez.

Loutoby will be leaving the island in March to do this and will be coming back in April. He will be gone for about a month.

With the ever-growing number of incidences of diabetes on the CNMI, many of them have kidney problems that require regular dialysis.

Woman reported missing last month missing again

A woman who was reported missing last month and subsequently appeared at home has disappeared again since Valentine's Day.

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said that police received a report Tuesday morning that Rosalia Theresa Mettao Galang has been missing again.

Ogumoro said preliminary investigation showed that the 40-year-old Galang was last seen at a relative's house on Feb. 14 in Koblerville, where she was babysitting.

On that day, Galang called her husband that she would be heading to a store to purchase an item.

Family members at the Koblerville residence told the husband that she never returned that day.

"DPS is seeking the assistance of the community for any information regarding the whereabouts of Galang. Should you have any information, please contact the Criminal Investigation Bureau at 664-9042/9055 or 287-9103," Ogumoro said.

Last Jan. 14, DPS reported that Galang has been missing since Dec. 30, 2007.

Ogumoro said Galang went back to her house when the news about her disappearance appeared in newspapers. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Tourist robbed at knife point along pathway

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

An unidentified man robbed at knife point a tourist who was walking along Beach Road pathway in Garapan Tuesday at midnight.

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said yesterday that the victim, a 36-year-old male Japanese, was divested of his leather brown wallet, bracelet, necklace and a Rolex wrist watch.

Ogumoro said that on Tuesday at 12:53am police responded to a report of an armed robbery incident that occurred along the pathway.

Preliminary investigation showed that the victim and his friend, another male Japanese tourist, were walking south along the Beach Road pathway.

When the tourists reached the area across Dollar Poker, a white 15-passenger van pulled up next to the two.

An unidentified man armed with a knife pulled one of the tourists into the back of the van and forced him to hand over his wallet, bracelet, necklace, and wrist watch.

The suspect then pushed the victim out of the vehicle, which then sped south along Beach Road.

The second tourist was not robbed.

The robber was described as medium-built, dark-complexioned, and was wearing a hat and a pair of sunglasses.

"This case is pending further investigation," Ogumoro said.

Crime Stoppers is asking the community for more information on any person(s) responsible for the recent wave of armed robberies.

Anyone having information about these crimes are encouraged to call the Crime Stoppers hotline at 234-7272. Crime Stoppers pays cash rewards up to $1,000 for information leading to an arrest. Caller ID is not used. All calls remain anonymous.

Last Feb. 11, a female cashier's bravery foiled two armed men's attempt to rob Leo Poker in San Jose.

The suspects ran away when the cashier refused to open the door of the cashier's booth in the establishment.

On Jan. 26, two masked men robbed a man at knife point in front of a laundry shop in Chalan Piao.

On Jan. 23, two armed men attempted to rob Hong's Market in San Vicente. The suspects ran away when the son of the cashier came out from behind the store and confronted the suspects.

Five other armed robberies occurred in January on Saipan.

Live-fire training at Farallon

The Emergency Management Office, in conjunction with U.S. Naval Forces Marianas Guam, said that the U.S. military began conducting live-fire training on the island of Farallon De Mendenilla yesterday. The training will last until Feb. 29, 2008. It is usually held from 9am to 8pm.

The general location of this activity will be on the island of Farallon De Mendenilla Training Area on a 10 nautical mile radius on all quadrants.

Due to the danger imposed by this activity, EMO is advising the public, especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators, to stay away from this area during the time and dates indicated.

For more information, contact the EMO Operations Section at telephone numbers 322-9528 and 322-9529, VHF MARINE CHNL 16, and HF Single Side Band Radio on 5.205.0. ***(EMO)***

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NMC'S ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Momentum toward reaffirmation continues

The Northern Marianas College's efforts toward accreditation reaffirmation gained further momentum last week with the introduction of a house bill that earmarks $3 million for building improvements and a master plan for NMC's new campus.

If enacted into law, House Bill 16-28 will reappropriate $3 million from funds that had earlier been committed to the closure of the Puerto Rico Dump to pay for building improvements and repair at NMC's As Terlaje campus and the purchase of collateral equipment. The funds will also be used for the development of a master plan and architecture and design of a new NMC campus. The bill was introduced by Rep. David Apatang.

"One of the chief concerns of the accrediting commission was the poor conditions of some of NMC's physical structures," said NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez. "The passage of House Bill 16-28 will go a long way in addressing these concerns and in helping secure an upgrade in our accreditation status."

The news from the Legislature complemented another positive report from the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs: In a private meeting with Dr. Fernandez, OIA Field Representative Jeff Schorr stated that NMC's request for a $400,000 grant has been approved. Part of the Operations and Maintenance Improvement Project, the grant will be used to pay for an upgrade to NMC's information systems and training for IT staff and students.

"With this grant, we can now improve NMC's information technology infrastructure, which is critical to the advancement of our students and, ultimately, the CNMI's local workforce," Fernandez said.

As the funding from the Legislature and the OIA are in progress, Fernandez has been meeting with various stakeholders to raise public awareness about NMC's accreditation status as well as recruit assistance from community leaders.

On Thursday, Fernandez presided over two accreditation forums sponsored by the Associated Students of NMC. The forums, which gave attendees an opportunity to raise questions about the show cause accreditation statues, were attended by students, parents, faculty, staff, media representatives, and other community members. Earlier in the day, Fernandez also met with Rep. Ralph Torres to discuss the college's funding needs. ***(NMC)***

Local artists honor patron saint tonight

A group of Rota expatriates is providing Saipan residents with a musical treat tonight by producing the islands' biggest concert featuring local artists in celebration of the San Isidro Fiesta celebrated in Rota in March.

A total of eight individual and group artists will showcase their talents in tonight's concert, which would be held at the Garapan Central Park starting at 6pm.

Ross Manglona, vice president of the San Isidro Saipan subcommittee said, "the event is sure to be a whole lot of fun."

"We want to put this concert out and showcase our local talent while raising funds for the church," Manglona said.

The concert would feature local legends Kevin Atalig, Candy Taman, Richard Manglona upcoming artists Dean Manglona, Ana Maria Inos, and the always entertaining island reggae style of the Local Boys and Marvin Guerrero including special appearances from the locally known dancers Inatuas and the 2007 Miss San Isidro Naomi M. Sasaki and 2007 Miss Teen Kayla Dee M. Atalig.

Manglona said that this event was made possible through the efforts of volunteers and generous donors. The group is pleased with the support from the public. He said that their tickets are sold out; however people can still enter by paying a $15 cover charge.

Manglona says the committee acknowledges Sen. Paul Manglona, Rep. Victor Hocog, Sen. Paterno Hocog, DPS Crime Prevention Unit, Joeten Enterprises, Pacific Islands Club, X.O. Market, and the music artists for making this event possible. ***(PR)***

ROTARIAN GREETINGS
Saipan Rotarians at the Saipan International Airport greet a group of visiting Japanese Rotarians from a sister club. Japanese Rotarians visited Saipan to help the Rotary Club of Saipan celebrate its 40th anniversary in February.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Grand Diva Lip Sync Contest finals tonight

Monique

Angel

Jaz

Krystala

Sunshine

All roads lead to the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan tonight for the final night of the Grand Diva Lip Sync Contest.

Called "The Grand Amazing Showgirls," a total of 16 drag queens will be vying for the top prizes during the finals night tonight, Feb. 28.

Dubbed as the biggest gay contest on Saipan, this event is the culminating event of Saipan Grand Hotel's Laffa Adai Thursday. And like the usual Thursday night gig at Southern Cross, tonight's event will be hosted by the Tres Marianas: Marconi, Hapi, and Paul.

A popular segment of the contest is the PTI Text Voting, where supporters of each contestant text in their votes of who should be declared the PTI Diva Stars. Those who garner the top three highest number of text votes will be declared the PTI Diva Stars, with prizes from PTI and trophies.

As of press time yesterday, the online text tabulation at www.pticom.com/laffadai/ showed Monique leading the pack at first place. In second position was Jaz, while in third place was Krystala. Angel was in fourth place, while the fifth spot was occupied by Sunshine. Go to www.pticom.com/laffadai/ for updated information.

In tonight's final judging, text votes comprise 30 percent of the criteria.

Awards and prizes at stake in tonight's contest are:

- $500 for the Grand Champion plus sash and trophy
- $400 for the 1st Runner plus sash and trophy
- $300 for the 2nd runner up plus sash and trophy
- $200 for 3rd runner up plus sash and trophy
- $100 for 4th runner plus sash and trophy

Special Awards will also be given out (with sash and gift certificates) as follows:

- Miss Funny Valentine – judged last Valentine during the showdown
- Miss Congeniality to be chosen among themselves

THE GRAND DIVA LIP SYNC CONTEST

Text Vote Result as of:
Feb 27, 2008 at 05:08:07 PM

0415 - 1st
0402 - 2nd
0413 - 3rd
0411 - 4th
0404 - 5th
0412 - 6th
0407 - 7th
0403 - 8th
0414 - 9th
0405 - 10th
0409 - 11th
0400 - 12th
0408 - 13th
0410 - 14th
0406 - 15th
0401 - 16th

- Best In Production Number—Cloth was given to all 16 contestant and they were to create their own design to be worn during the opening number. This will be 10 percent of the criteria for judging
- Best in Production Number
- Most Amazing Gown
- Most Amazing Hairstyle
- Most Amazing Beauty
- Most Amazing Impersonator
- Most Amazing Make-up
- Most Amazing Dancer

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

February 28, 2000

Teno eyes $10 million cut in deficit this year
With wider cost-cutting measures and economic revitalization programs already in place, the Tenorio Administration is hoping to reduce the cumulative budget deficit by another $10 million this fiscal year. The $80.6 million budget deficit was down to $70.7 million by end of Fiscal Year 1999. Government officials attribute the landmark reduction to drastic austerity measures instituted by Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio.

House clears way for revival of 80 MW power plant
The House of Representatives on Friday followed the lead taken by the upper chamber of the CNMI Legislature as it cleared the road for the revival of the controversial 80-megawatt power plant project. Members of the lower house approved a Senate-sponsored legislation aimed at forcing the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation to adhere to the original proposal despite recommendation from a private firm suggesting that CUC build a smaller power plant.

Gov't pressed to invest in education
House Speaker Ben Fitial on Friday urged the CNMI government to make programs aimed at improving the Commonwealth's educational system in light of economic diversification plans. Mr. Fitial said the government's efforts to diversify and revitalize the local economy is dependent heavily on a strong educational system, explaining that both small- and large-scale investments require qualified workers.

February 28, 2001

Excise tax collection rose 10 percent
In what appears to be a relief from financial upheavals, the CNMI government reported a landmark increase in the amount of revenues generated from excise taxes in the first three quarters of the fiscal year 2000. A report on economic indicators prepared by the Department of Commerce revealed government earnings from excise taxes jumped 10.4 percent to $15.9 million in the January-September 2000 period from the previous year's 14.4 million.

Clamor to repeal 3-yr. limit grows
Former Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Joe C. Ayuyu believes the CNMI economy would be crippled if government would not take action to repeal the three-year limit law. In an interview, Mr. Ayuyu said the implementation of Public Law 11-69 would lead to the mass departure of nonresident workers from the Northern Marianas, leaving businesses practically unmanned .

Business group backs 2-year job contract for nonresidents
Businessmen and employers will be relieved from administrative and technical problems if thousands of non-resident workers will be given a two-year renewable job contract. In fact, it will be more efficient and less expensive for business operators if the proposal will be given weight by members of the CNMI Legislature, Saipan Garment Manufactures Association Executive Director Richard Pierce said yesterday.

February 28, 2002

Another revenue whammy for NMI
Since 1999, user fee collections in the CNMI has consistently been declining and the Department of Commerce estimates that by 2005, user fee collections may actually plunge to as low as just $1 million. Although the excise tax collections were more consistent on a year-to-year basis, collections starting October 2001 up to January this year have also been steadily going down, which could jeopardize the overall excise tax collections for Fiscal Year 2001-2002.

Help rolls up for Tinian breakwater
The continued deterioration of the Tinian harbor will aggravate the economic difficulties currently faced by the island due to possible disruption in the conduct of inter-island commerce, according to a federal report submitted to the Commonwealth Ports Authority. The US Army Corps of Engineers, in a report, disclosed that the worsening condition of the Tinian breakwater could result in unwanted delays on the delivery of cargoes from Saipan to the island, which may push the prices of basic commodities up.

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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EDITORIAL

Nader's nadir

Hey, America, want to hear some secrets the mainstream media and political parties have been keeping from you? There's a war going on in Iraq; President Bush passed some tax cuts a while back that, combined with undisciplined spending, have contributed to a ballooning national debt; and apparently the price of oil has really started to degrade the nation's energy situation.

These are some of the obscure issues that Ralph Nader, announcing his presidential candidacy on Sunday, promised to drag out of the shadows. It's an interesting demonstration of why he'll have a tough time mounting even a message-sending campaign this year, but also of why he's a welcome addition to the race.

Among Democrats, many of whom still blame Nader for allegedly tilting the 2000 election to Bush, tempers have grown so cool that neither Barack Obama nor Hillary Rodham Clinton bothered to attack the 73-year-old activist turned three-time candidate. Obama graciously alluded to Nader's "outstanding work" as a consumer advocate. Clinton merely objected that his candidacy would not be "helpful to whomever our Democratic nominee is." Among non-candidates, reactions were considerably less measured. Journalist James Fallows called Nader's 2000 campaign a "tragedy" that has evolved into a "farce" in 2008. "Americans dont (sic) need him de-stabilizing our democratic process again!" wrote "Stan" on a CNN blog, and talk radio host Bill Press called Nader a "colossal, misguided, egomaniacal nut case."

That's a lot of condemnation for a candidate whose total vote take dropped about 85 percent between 2000 and 2004, and whose chances of playing even a spoiler role in 2008 are exceedingly slim. But Nader's run would be worth applauding even if his odds of making a difference were good. The Democrats and Republicans may believe your vote belongs to one or the other of them before it belongs to you, but they are wrong. More choices among candidates mean more opportunities for you to make your views known in an election.

Nader's structural weaknesses this time around are vast. Many of his messages, as indicated above, are commonplaces, and his advocacy of a single-payer health-care system and a vast reduction in defense spending suffers not from voter ignorance but voter hostility. Finally, although there's much truth in his argument that the two parties are often indistinguishable, that's a tougher case to make this year. Anti-Naderists will argue that he doesn't need to win to do damage; he merely needs to draw Democratic votes. If he should succeed in doing that, though, more power to him. Anybody who expects to become president of the United States had better be prepared to face tougher adversaries than Ralph Nader.

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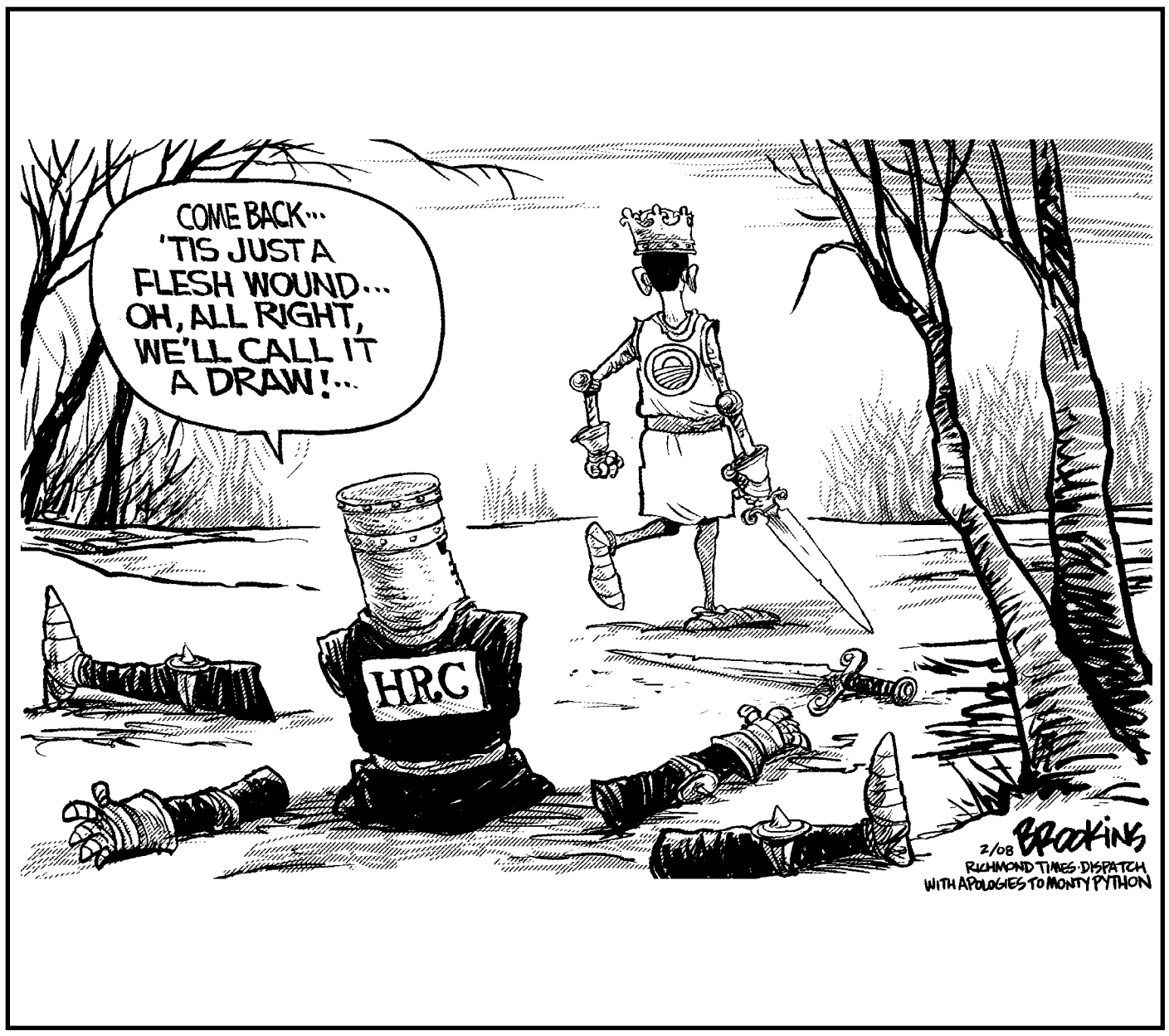

COME BACK... 'TIS JUST A FLESH WOUND... OH, ALL RIGHT, WE'LL CALL IT A DRAW!...
HRC
2/08 BROOKINS
RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH
WITH APOLOGIES TO MONTY PYTHON

Learn to earn

"The illiterate of the future are not those who can't read and write, but those that cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."—Alvin Toffler, futurist

By RIK and JANEL VILLEGAS

Rik is a business instructor at NMC and Janel is a partner with BizResults, LLC (www.bizresults.org). They can be contacted at biz_results@yahoo.com.

When I managed an office years ago, a large box with business books I'd purchased arrived in the mail. Some individuals with MBAs asked what was in the box and when I told them they laughed because I had spent my own money on books. I spend several hundred dollars each year on books, and thought it was odd that they did not continue to learn after graduate school; except for the expensive company paid seminars they'd attended. However, when the Harvard Business Review printed an article that states only 10 percent of the population has "the learning mindset," it made sense to me why I was the oddball.

Individuals with the learning mindset seek out and actually enjoy learning. They'll invest their own money to go to seminars, buy books, reports, CDs and DVDs for personal growth and professional development. The other 90 percent of the population will not look to improve their skills unless it is required for the job, and usually on the company's tab.

As an employee, you should be focused on personal growth and professional development to remain employable and promotable. Jeanne Meister, author of *Changes in the Workplace*, said "In your career, knowledge is like a carton of milk; it has a shelf life and if you're not replacing everything you know every couple of years, then your career is going to turn sour just like that carton of milk."

Your current level of knowledge and skill is becoming obsolete at a faster rate today than ever before because of the changes in technology and rate of information growth. Your earning ability can either be a depreciating or an appreciating asset, depending on your effort to upgrade and expand your knowledge and skills.

As a manager, an important responsibility is to help improve the skills and professionalism of every person you supervise. One of the definitions of a manager is someone who directs the work of others to get things done. Training increases the knowledge and skills of your people, which improves their performance. This allows you to get more things done through people, and consequently makes you a more effective manager.

As a business owner, you should be extremely interested in the professional development of every person in your company. This will not only benefit your people, but your overall performance, including the bottom line. If you just leave it up to your people to learn, nine out of 10 won't, and the other 10 percent are probably doing it so they can improve their skills to find a better paying job that offers training programs.

A Louis Harris and Associate Poll states that among employees who say their company offers poor or no training, 41 percent plan to leave within a year. Of those that say their company offers excellent training, only 12 percent say they plan to leave. Consistent, quality training will help set and raise standards of performance, and improve your employees' understanding of your organization's objectives. It will not only reduce employee turnover, it can also improve customer service and increase sales effectiveness.

Some of America's most visionary companies have a goal to sustain their competitive advantage by inspiring lifelong learning and providing professional development opportunities. Their focus has shifted from the typical classroom learning to develop a continuous learning culture where employees learn from each other to solve real business issues.

Many organizations are starting to link what their employees earn to what they learn. Individuals are expected to be proactive toward learning by developing an individual development plan to help them examine their needs, plan their professional development, and track their performance against the goals in the plan. In a merit-based society, the amount of money an individual earns increases as his or her ability to contribute to the performance of the company increases.

Your earning capability is directly tied to your learning ability. All business skills are learnable. If you are not achieving what others have accomplished, it just means that you have not learned and applied the necessary skills. The questions to ask, then, are what do you need to learn and when will you start? If not now, when, and if then, why not now?

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Want to cut crime? It takes a neighborhood

By TIM HARFORD
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

One Washington evening two summers ago, my wife and I were strolling down 15th Street NW, licking ice cream cones and chatting as our 13-month-old daughter wriggled in a carrier on my back. Then a scream from across the street snapped us out of our conversation. Looking up, I saw a man chasing a woman around a car that had come to a sudden halt in the middle of the street.

For a moment I thought it was all in fun until the woman fell and the man punched her, hard. A quicker-thinking bystander sprinted through traffic and barreled into the assailant, momentarily knocking him away from the prone woman. I handed the baby to my wife and trotted across the street. Up close, I realized I might be making a big mistake: All three people in the struggle were slick with blood.

My main contribution was an undignified yank on the knifeman's clothes. No matter: Within a few seconds, half a dozen men were sitting on the attacker. I crouched beside the young victim, looking at her eyes and the awful knife wounds on her arm and in her belly. I could hardly believe she might survive.

She did. The neighborhood itself had saved her.

These days I live in London, near a park where recently a young American woman out for her morning run also suffered a knife attack. Nobody helped, she died, and the murderer has not been caught.

Two wholly random assaults—the D.C. attacker told police he didn't know his victim and had been taking drugs to celebrate his 21st birthday—with equally random outcomes. Life and death seemed arbitrary.

Over the months that followed, I found the experience infiltrating my life as a writer and an economist. I was writing a book about how economics can help us find the hidden logic in aspects of life that seem complex and unpredictable. Could economics say anything about what makes our neighborhoods defend us or abandon us?

I discovered that it could. Economists can now tell us why neighborhoods go through dramatic transitions from dangerous to safe or rich to poor; they have established a clear link between urban architecture and crime; they can even shed some light on whether local crime is contagious. And they can tell us what difference law enforcement really makes when the streets are peopled by those who try to kill for no reason.

Cities frequently fall into a sharply defined patchwork of thriving areas and struggling ones, often divided along racial lines. It is easy to see this as the result of bitter prejudice. But the Nobel Prize-winning economist Thomas Schelling proved decades ago that the motivations that lead to segregation may be less entrenched than you might suppose.

In the days before computer simulations, Schelling demonstrated his theory with a game played with randomly distributed pennies and nickels on a checkerboard. He invented a simple rule for how the coins moved: A nickel could be happy as long as it was touching two or more other nickels. But if it touched only one other nickel, it would hop elsewhere, leaving its former neighbor isolated. One coin after another would move in a chain reaction. Schelling's game seemed to make possible a mixed checkerboard, but the result was always segregation.

The lesson? Even if everyone were comfortable living in a mixed neighborhood, extreme segregation—by race, class or income—could still emerge from people's mild preferences not to be outnumbered. Countless individually rational decisions can snowball into a socially regrettable outcome.

Schelling's successors are exploring ways in which societies can "flip" from bad situations to good ones. City streets can be unsettlingly empty or reassuringly thronged with passers-by. The safer and livelier the streets feel, the safer and livelier they become. This virtuous circle means a small catalyst can transform a neighborhood from struggling to thriving.

Architecture matters, too, something we feel intuitively but find hard to prove or quantify. Think of high-rise apartments. Do they make a city safer by packing more people into an area and giving the streets a greater bustle? Or are cities safer if most buildings are low-rise, so people feel a connection to the street?

Two new-wave economists, Edward Glaeser of Harvard and Bruce Sacerdote of Dartmouth, matched crime figures with data on building height and discovered that the residents of high-rise apartments are much more likely to be crime victims, specifically street crime. The effect remains similar after statistically adjusting for poverty, demographics and public housing: It's the height of the building itself that matters.

This backs up urbanist Jane Jacobs' persuasive, but unproven, insight that "eyes on the street" make a neighborhood safe. The hero who sprinted over to knock the knife away was sitting on his stoop, not gazing out his penthouse window.

We also know much more than we did 10 years ago about law enforcement's role in keeping our cities safe. Steven Levitt of the University of Chicago, now famous as the co-author of "Freakonomics," used state-by-state differences in the juvenile punishment system to show that teenage delinquents paid close attention to the threat of punishment. The day they passed the age of majority was the day they cleaned up their act—an effect that was more pronounced in states where the adult penal system was dramatically harsher than the juvenile one. Economists Alex Tabarrok and Jonathan Klick recently found that crime dropped noticeably in Washington when extra police were placed on duty because of terrorism alerts.

Neither result was a surprise—you'd expect tough sentences and more cops to deter crime—but the researchers were able to tell policymakers how big the effect was.

These discoveries are a mere handful of jigsaw pieces from a very large puzzle, but they are credible explanations discovered in the face of the apparent randomness of everyday life. While the economics profession won't rescue the inner cities by itself, policymakers should make decisions about policing, public housing and planning in light of the evidence.

Our cities remain vital centers. New ideas are concentrated there; their environmental footprint is low because more residents live in small apartments and travel on foot; and young people still flock there in search of freedom and excitement. We need to make these great cooperative machines work better. Our city neighborhoods have a logic to them, and it's a logic we should try to understand. Our neighborhoods—sometimes even our lives—depend on it.

Harford, a Financial Times columnist, is the author of The Logic of Life: The Rational Economics of an Irrational World.

Letters to the Editor

Robbed by our fellow citizens

I write in response to the article by Anthony Pellegrino, "Robbed by our fellow citizens Part II," that appeared in the *Saipan Tribune* on Monday, Feb. 25, 2008.

The statute of limitations expired several years ago for most of the payments referred to by Mr. Pellegrino. Likewise, debts discharged in bankruptcy are no longer collectible.

When autonomous agencies authorize the ill-advised expenditure of public funds, as reflected in an audit finding, that does not necessarily rise to the level of a criminal action or even civil complaint.

Such autonomous agency decision-making does, however, warrant legislative authorization for removal of the agency officials, non-reelection and recall (if applicable) of the officials, or even abolition of the entire agency.

Once an agency is abolished or its officials removed, replacement by persons of the highest standards of ethics and competence remains paramount.

There is one case involving the Department of Public Lands, where a business owes millions of dollars in quarry and permit fees. A permit to mine pozzolan on Pagan was terminated by DPL. The 15th Commonwealth Legislature passed special interest legislation purporting to reinstate the permit. The appeal is currently pending before the Commonwealth Supreme Court.

Mr. Pellegrino himself was involved in the construction of the Outer Cove Marina that did not fully comport with initial presentations made to the Legislature, yet ultimately resulted in a judgment of millions of dollars in his favor against the Commonwealth.

He was also a member of the Board of Education during the construction of Southern High School, for which the Commonwealth was ordered by the Superior Court to pay a million dollars on the basis of a "verbal change order" despite the contractor's failure to build a gymnasium.

So, of all people, Anthony Pellegrino should be well aware of how the Commonwealth manages to lose millions of dollars, and that it is mostly unrecoverable. The best way to save money is not to waste it in the first place.

Gregory Baka
Deputy Attorney General
Capital Hill, Saipan

CDA: Commonwealth Destruction Authority

Recently Governor Fitial expressed a plan to consolidate CDA into the Department of Commerce. I fully support this idea and would urge that the Governor do so immediately. You see, I borrowed money from CDA for my boat, Sea Spray Marine. I owe CDA about $220,000. However, the government took our land on Navy Hill in 1991 for the paved road. Since then it hasn't paid us. It never paid. Others have been paid, including the lot next door. We weren't. Only in 2006, over 20 years, did the government finally make an offer (over $300,00 due). But they haven't told us when. I'm willing to fully pay CDA by signing over the money first to pay CDA. Question: Do you think CDA trusts its own sister agency to pay? CDA says "No. We don't trust the offer." Now tell me how am I to pay, in this economy, over $220,000 when the government owes us over $300,000? CDA says, agree to a judgment and then we'll take that offer. In other words, if the government doesn't pay in five years, they'll take our land, boat and business and I still have to wait for DPL to pay.

I think the above shows Governor Fitial and the Legislature why it is time to close CDA and put it under Commerce: It would be accountable to the Executive Branch. Besides, it doesn't do anything anyway except destroy lives, foreclose property; and ignore people.

Pay us. We'll pay CDA. If CDA can't trust DPL, why should we trust CDA?

Frederick L. Nosek Jr.
Sea Spray Marine Company

Unicameral legislature

I came across an article that involved a proposal by Sen. Pete Reyes calling for a reduction in the seats at the Legislature. Senator, you stated that you will support such an initiative, and also maintain that you have been a strong advocate of a part-time legislature for the longest time. With that, I am confident that you hold enough ammunition to support such a proposal but what about a unicameral? I challenge you, and those who claim to support such initiatives to assist in gathering the required vote count needed to have either one of these cost-saving initiatives reviewed and approved. If this requires an amendment to our Constitution, we have an election approaching.

I am sure we can all agree that the CNMI has complex issues that require time to resolve. The obvious here is that cutting heads, and/or time may be detrimental to: one, time constraint matters, and two, the lack of professional opinion. Clearly, we can see this, given that even a fully staffed Legislature isn't able to ever pass a budget on time.

However, cost savings and altering initiatives like these put the right people in office: Those who will make things happen: Those who are serious about making decisions that are just, educated, and with returns. Lawmaking is not a career, it is a passion.

LJ Duenas
Portland, OR

Not fair?

Not fair?!? Mr. Torres. Let us talk about what is fair, and what is not. Oil prices are not set by the oil companies. Let me repeat that: Oil prices are not set by the oil companies!

Would it be fair to the shareholders of the oil company to sell a product to a consumer at less than the established commodities market value? Would it be fair for oil companies to absorb ever changing operating costs to cut us a break? Would it be fair to subpoena from Singapore the oil company reps with the answers? Who absorbs those costs?

Would it be fair to let you, and the rest of the legislative branch of our government, continue to draw exorbitant salaries, waste discretionary funds, and turn a blind eye to the most fraudulent, and wasteful government in the history of the world? Oh, wait. I know the answer to the last one. Yes. Yes indeed.

Instead of wasting time and money on figuring out why prices are high, try focusing on why people are suffering. Nice try, though. Trying to put the blame on big oil for our problems. You and the rest of your ilk are the problem, Mr. Torres. Mr. Torres, you and most of your cronies are a disgrace to everything that is good and decent about these islands. Everyone knows it, sir, and so do you.

Paul Harsany
Garapan, Saipan

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲81° ▼74°	▲81° ▼75°	▲81° ▼75°	▲82° ▼75°	▲82° ▼74°

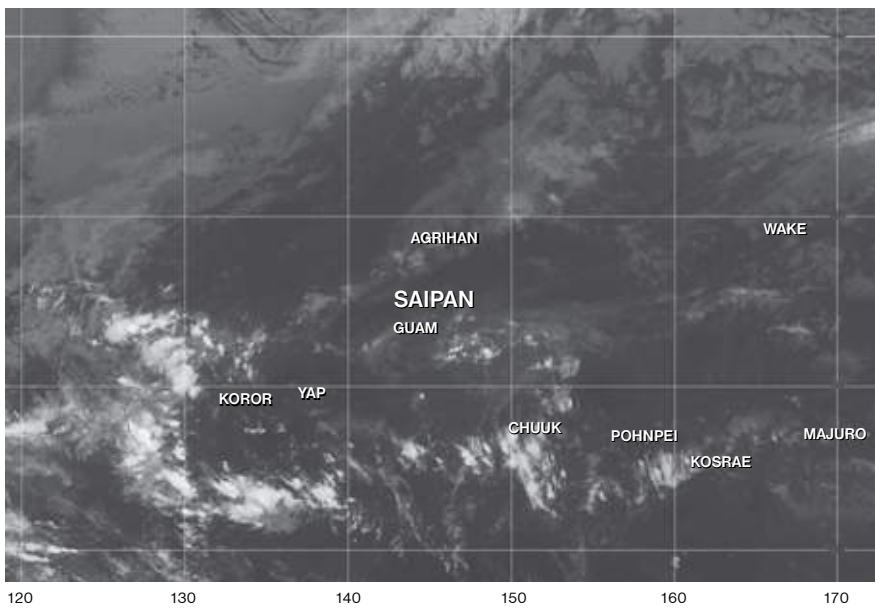
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Cloudy	▲83	▼76
Palau	Partly Sunny	▲88	▼77
Yap	Partly Sunny	▲88	▼77
Chuuk	Cloudy	▲88	▼77
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	▲81	▼72
Kosrae	Partly Sunny	▲87	▼75
Majuro	Cloudy	▲85	▼73

Around The Globe

Auckland	Partly Sunny	▲72	▼62
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲52	▼33
Hong Kong	Cloudy	▲63	▼58
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲79	▼69
London	Showers	▲50	▼41
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲75	▼54
Manila	Thunderstorms	▲81	▼73
Melbourne	Partly Sunny	▲64	▼46
Miami	Mostly Sunny	▲69	▼57
New York	Mostly Sunny	▲33	▼24
Osaka	Partly Sunny	▲42	▼33
Paris	Cloudy	▲51	▼44
Pusan	Sunny	▲52	▼32
Rome	Cloudy	▲59	▼47
Salem	Mostly Cloudy	▲57	▼40
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	▲63	▼47
Seoul	Partly Sunny	▲41	▼25
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲52	▼38
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	▲37	▼28

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, WEDNESDAY, FEB. 27, 2008
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A shear line extends westward from 23N180 to 19N163E. Extensive cloudiness and scattered showers are found along and up to 150 miles north of the shear line. Another shear line stretches southwestward from 25N159E through the northern CNMI to 9N130E. Extensive cloudiness and scattered showers are found along and up to 150 miles northwest of the shear line with some isolated thunderstorms west of 134E. A new shear line runs southwestward from 25N139E to 19N130E. Extensive cloudiness and scattered showers are found north of the shear line to 25N and beyond. Trade-wind convergence is causing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms within 120 miles of a line from 3N130E to 4N140E to 6N150E to 3N152E. This is south of Koror, Yap and Chuuk. Trade-wind convergence is generating scattered showers south of Majuro between 2N and 7N from 173E to 179E.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
12:53AM Today	High Tide:	1.4 Feet
05:49AM Today	Low Tide:	1.1 Feet
11:18AM Today	High Tide:	1.7 Feet
07:06PM Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:35AM	6:24PM
Friday	6:35AM	6:24PM
Saturday	6:34AM	6:25PM
Sunday	6:34AM	6:25PM
Monday	6:33AM	6:25PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today		10:54AM
Friday	12:20AM	11:40AM
Saturday	01:13AM	12:30PM
Sunday	02:06AM	01:23PM
Monday	02:57AM	02:18PM

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The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

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- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

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- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

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Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 15, 2008

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota			
CO 9313	8:30am	9:05am	3,4,7
Saipan-Guam			
CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9597	8:30am	9:20am	1,2,5,6
CO9313	8:30am	10:00am	3,4,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	Daily
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Narita			
NW 078	8:25am	1:30pm	Daily via Nagoya
NW 075	4:50pm	7:30pm	Daily
Saipan-Osaka			
NW 083	4:30pm	7:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Nagoya			
NW 078	8:25am	11:05am	Daily
Saipan-Manila			
CO 895	4:45pm	6:35pm	6
CO 895	6:45pm	8:35pm	3
Saipan-Seoul			
OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 606	3:30pm	7:00pm	2,4,6,7
Saipan-Busan			
OZ 608	4:00am	7:35am	1,4,5,7
Saipan-Guanzhou			
CZ 3008	5:00am	8:00am	2,6
Saipan-Shanghai			
MU 590	4:20am	7:00am	2,6
Guam-Manila			
CO 891	6:00am	10:30am	3 via Yap and Koror
CO 893	6:30am	8:05am	6
CO 893	8:25am	10:00am	2,7
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:45am	1,2,4,6,7
Guam-Hongkong			
CO 909	7:45pm	10:40pm	1,5
Guam-Rota			
CO 9598	10:15am	10:45am	1,2,6

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan			
CO 9598	11:10am	11:45am	1,2,6
Guam-Saipan			
CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	Daily
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9598	10:15am	11:45am	1,2,6 via Rota
CO9600	10:45am	11:35am	3,4,5,7
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily
Narita-Saipan			
NW 076	10:35am	3:05pm	Daily
NW 077	6:15pm	1:10am+1	Daily via Nagoya
Osaka-Saipan			
NW 084	10:40am	3:10pm	Daily
Nagoya-Saipan			
NW 077	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily
Manila-Saipan			
CO 890	9:15am	2:55pm	6
CO 890	11:45am	5:35pm	3
Seoul-Saipan			
OZ 605	9:00am	2:30pm	2,4,6,7
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
Busan-Saipan			
OZ 607	9:30pm	2:50am+1	3,4,6,7
Guanzhou-Saipan			
CZ 3007	8:00pm	4:00am+1	1,5
Shanghai-Saipan			
MU 589	8:05pm	3:00am+1	1,5
Manila-Guam			
CO 894	11:20am	4:55pm	2,7
CO 894	7:45pm	1:20am+1	6
CO 892	9:45pm	5:25am+1	3 via Koror
CO 892	9:45pm	6:30am+1	3 via Koror and Yap
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7
Hongkong-Guam			
CO 910	11:40pm	6:20am+1	1,5
Rota-Guam			
CO 9313	9:30am	10:00am	3,4,7

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana; MU: China Eastern ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Bordallo calls for MOU, results at IGIA meeting

WASHINGTON, D.C.—During the 2008 plenary session of the President's Interagency Group on Insular Areas yesterday, Guam Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo renewed the call for a Memorandum of Understanding to be pursued by the various federal agencies regarding the military buildup.

It is suggested that the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Navy take the lead in developing an MOU, with support from the U.S. departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development. The MOU would outline federal assistance for Guam that can be reasonably relied on in the years ahead and as the military buildup moves forward.

Bordallo emphasized the need to strengthen the communication and to move in the direction of results during what she described as a "pivotal" year in planning.

"The President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2009 submitted to Congress earlier this month contains no mention of or funds for the buildup. Discussing roles and examining Guam's capabilities have dominated the dialogue of the IGIA to date," Bordallo said during the meeting. "What remains absent is a commitment or understanding between the federal government and the Government of Guam on how to provide the assistance that everyone agrees Guam will need."

Bordallo added, "We need an MOU in order to plan how we should move forward. I also need this understanding to be reached between the Executive Branch and the Government of Guam so that Congress can support the efforts of the IGIA in the Congressional oversight and appropriations processes."

Roughly 25 federal departments and agencies were represented at yesterday's meeting, which lasted over two hours. Apart from the focus on the interagency and intergovernmental work associated with the military buildup was Bordallo's renewed requests for the IGIA to review and recommend actions on a cost-sharing arrangement for the Earned Income Tax Credit in Guam and the Virgin Islands; an increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage affecting Medicaid funding in the territories; and for federal policies supporting growth in the visitor and tourism industries in the territories.

All three issues have been previously placed before the IGIA by Bordallo, her colleagues representing the territories in Congress, and the Governors.

Immediately following the plenary session of the IGIA, was a second IGIA meeting: an IGIA working group meeting dedicated to the Guam buildup.

This was the third meeting of the IGIA working group in Washington, D.C. since it first met in August 2007. Reports were delivered at yesterday's meeting from the federal leads on the labor, health and human services, socio-economic, environment, and infrastructure subgroups.

Bordallo

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne opened and chaired the meeting with participation by Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Environment B.J. Penn. Maj. Gen. David F. Bice, USMC Ret., executive director of the Joint Guam Program Office under the Department of the Navy, was present for both meetings and helped facilitate interagency discussion at the buildup session.

The IGIA coordinates federal policy for Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Membership is comprised of the heads of each department in the executive branch, and the heads of other federal agencies designated by the Secretary of the Interior. President George W. Bush established the IGIA by Executive Order in May 2003. ***(PR)***

Interior awards $6M to Guam

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Federal Interagency Task Force on the Guam Military Buildup concluded its third meeting in Washington, D.C. yesterday afternoon with Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne awarding a total of $6 million in grants to Guam.

Kempthorne, who chaired the meeting, signed grant awards at the conclusion of the meeting committing discretionary federal funds to the Government of Guam in the current fiscal year. Guam Gov. Felix Camacho received the grants for the Guam Memorial Hospital, the Department of public Health and Social Services, and the Guam Community College.

Kempthorne awarded federal grants for the Guam Memorial Hospital in the amount of $5 million from Compact impact funding; $500,000 for the Guam Department of Public Health and Human Services; and $443,000 in operation and maintenance funds for improvements in workforce investment programs at the Guam Community College.

"Secretary Kempthorne's actions demonstrated his commitment to assisting Guam throughout this process. I commend him for his leadership of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas and I look forward to working with him to ensure that Guam receives the federal assistance we need for the military buildup to be successful for our community," Guam Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo said. ***(PR)***

TAMI HEILEMANN

Palauan leaders meet with Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne on Feb. 25, 2008. From left, Steve McGann, director of East Asia and Pacific, U.S. State Department; Surangel Whipps, President of the Palau Senate; Kasmir Remengesau (in back), director of Budget; Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne; Vann Isaac (in back), Office of the President; Palau President Tommy Remengesau Jr.; Billy Kuartei, Chief of Staff, Office of the President; Hersey Kyota, Palau Ambassador to the United States; Noah Idechong, Vice Speaker of the House.

Kempthorne meets with Palau president

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne met with the President of the Republic of Palau Tommy Remengesau on Feb. 25, 2008 to discuss a number of topics, including the possibility of creating a National Heritage Area on the Palau island of Peleliu to commemorate that important World War II battle, and the upcoming Review of the Compact of Free Association.

Kempthorne thanked Remengesau for Palau's continued support for the war on terror and Palauan citizens who continue to join the U.S. military. Remengesau stressed the importance of security and stability in Palau and the importance of the relationship between Palau and the United States.

Kempthorne, who visited Palau last June and toured the U.S.-built Babeldaob Road, congratulated Remengesau on being honored and recognized last October as one of Time Magazine's Heroes of the Environment.

Remengesau is in Washington, D.C., to participate in the 10th Annual Coral Reef Task Force meeting. ***(DOI)***

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

INVITATION FOR BID

This ad is paid by NMHC with HUD Funds.

IFB NO.: **NMHC - IFB08-006A – ROTA**
NMHC - IFB08-006B - TINIAN

FOR: **Building Maintenance of Section 8 Housing Units in Rota and Tinian**

Governor Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Governor Timothy P. Villagomez, through the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, are hereby giving notice that NMHC is soliciting sealed bids from interested, licensed companies in the Commonwealth to provide building maintenance services for its Section 8 Housing Units in Rota and Tinian.

Interested firms may pick up Bid Specifications at any of the NMHC Offices in Garapan, Saipan; San Jose Village, Tinian; or Songsong Village, Rota, beginning February 27, 2008, from 7:30 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

Two (2) separate mandatory Pre-Bid Conferences will each be held on the Islands of Rota and Tinian. In Rota, the Conference will be held at the NMHC Field Office located on the 1st Floor of the Sunset Villa Hotel in Sonton, Rota on Wednesday, March 19, 2008, at 10:30 a.m., and in Tinian, the Conference will be held at the NMHC Field Office located in the Juan King Building in San Jose Village at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 20, 2008. Bidders will have the opportunity to tour the housing subdivisions and inspect several housing units owned by NMHC that will be covered under the proposed contract. Attendance at this conference and site visit are considered essential to the bidders' understanding of the project elements and a company that does not have a representative in attendance at the pre-bid conference will be considered as a non-responsive bidder.

Bidders are reminded that this announcement covers two (2) separate bids—one for Rota, and one for Tinian.

Sealed bids shall be identified on outside of the envelope by Invitation for Bids No. **NMHC IFB08-006A - Building Maintenance for Section 8 Housing Units (ROTA)" or NMHC IFB08-006B - Building Maintenance for Section 8 Housing Units (TINIAN)"**. An original and three (3) copies of the bid must be submitted to the Procurement and Supply Office, Lower Base, Saipan no later than 10:00 am, **March 27, 2008**. Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for the receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to bid. Notices of Intent to Bid must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than 10:00 am local time, **March 27, 2008**, and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via email to procurement@pticom.com. For bidders outside the CNMI, an original and three (3) copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service, the official government postal service of a foreign country, or a commercial courier, no later than **March 27, 2008**, and must be received no later than **April 7, 2008**. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly opened and read at the Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, at 10:00 am, local time **April 8, 2008**. However, if no Notices of Intent to bid were received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be opened at 10:30 am, local time on **March 27, 2008**.

Bidders are advised that this project is subject to compliance with the Davis-Bacon Act and the labor standard provisions for wage rate determination of the Commonwealth. All labor on the project shall be paid no less than the minimum wage rate of $3.55 per hour which took effect on July 25, 2007 as established by Federal law including subsequent increases of $.50 per hour as announced by the U.S. Department of Labor and/or the CNMI Department of Labor until the hourly rate equals that of the Federal Minimum Wage of $7.50 per hour.

NMHC hereby notifies all bidders that it will affirmatively ensure that, in any contacts entered into pursuant to this advertisement, small, minority business and women's business enterprises will be afforded equal opportunity to submit bids and will not be discriminated against on grounds of race, color, religion, sex, disabilities or national origin.

This project is also subject to Section 3 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1968 which requires the successful bidder to the "maximum extent feasible", take affirmative steps to provide training, contracting and employment opportunities and help ensure that the economic opportunities generated by these HUD funds are provided to local low-income residents in Rota and Tinian.

Bidding procedures shall be in compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations, however, Article 7, "Local Business Preference", as amended by Public Laws 15-95 and as further amended by Public Law 15-118, is not available to local bidders in this procurement because its use is prohibited by the Federal law granting the funding for this project.

The bidder submitting the lowest responsible bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations Section 3-301. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsible bid will be awarded a contract with NMHC.

NMHC reserves the right to reject any and all bids for any reason and to waive any defects in the bids if determined to be in its best interest. All bids received shall become the property of the Commonwealth Government.

Should you require additional information, please direct inquiries to Edith C. Fejeran, Office Manager, via email to ecfejeran@nmhc.gov.mp or facsimile at (670) 234-9021.

/s/ MANUEL A. SABLAN
Chairman of the Board

/s/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
Director, Procurement & Supply

Business

Worries grow for worse 'stagflation'

WASHINGTON (AP)—It's a toxic economic mix the nation hasn't seen in three decades: Prices are speeding upward at the fastest pace in a quarter century, even as the economy loses steam.

Economists call the disease "stagflation," and they're worried it might be coming back.

Already, paychecks aren't stretching as far, and jobs are harder to find, threatening to set off a vicious cycle that could make things even worse.

The economy nearly stalled in the final three months of last year and probably is barely growing or even shrinking now. That's the "stagnation" part of the ailment. Typically, that slowdown should slow inflation as well—the second part of the diagnosis—but prices are still marching higher.

The latest worrisome news came Tuesday: a government report showing wholesale prices climbed 7.4 percent in the past year. That was the biggest annual leap since 1981.

"We're in a slowdown," Press Secretary Dana Perino said at the White House, where the economics talk was still upbeat until recently.

Once the twin evils of stagflation take hold, it can be hard to break the grip. People cut back on their spending as they are stung by rising prices and shriveling wages. Businesses, also socked by rising costs and declining demand from customers, clamp down on their hiring and capital investment.

That would be a nightmare scenario for Wall Street investors, businesses, politicians and most everyone else. They're already looking to the Federal Reserve for help, but the Fed's job is complicated by the situation.

AP

A shopper looks at bread at J.J. & F. Market in Palo Alto, Calif., Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008.

The mission of Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and his colleagues is to nurture economic growth and keep inflation under control. To brace the teetering economy, the Fed since September has been ratcheting down its key interest rate. Another cut is expected in March. However, to combat inflation, the Fed would be expected to boost rates instead.

"The Fed has its hands full. It is preoccupied with the economic slowdown at the front door, but inflation looks to be sneaking in the back door," said Greg McBride, senior financial analyst at Bankrate.com. "If that trend continues, the Fed would need to show the economy some tough love, meaning higher interest rates to keep inflation from getting out of hand."

On the other hand, Brian Bethune, economist at Global Insight, said Bernanke can fight only one war at a time, and the more pressing issue right now is to shore up the ailing economy.

Oil prices close at new high above $100

NEW YORK (AP)—Oil futures surged to a new closing record above $100 Tuesday as traders sought a safe haven against a dollar that is coming under increasing pressure from a shaky U.S. economy.

The greenback tumbled at one point to its lowest level ever against the euro, helping drive more money into energy futures. Supply concerns and a bullish attitude among stock traders also helped keep oil prices high.

"You're seeing more of a switch into commodity prices as a hedge against inflation," said Adam Hewison, president of INO.com, a financial Web site that specializes in futures trading.

Light, sweet crude for April delivery jumped $1.65 to settle at $100.88 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. At one point in the session, prices surged as high as $101.15.

Crossing the psychologically significant $100 mark once again—oil prices previously crossed that hurdle to set new records last week—in itself may have helped fuel the rally by triggering computer programs set to buy at certain levels and enticing new speculators into the market, said Jim Ritterbusch, president of energy consultancy Ritterbusch and Associates in Galena, Ill.

"You see additional buying among people who think they're missing something," he said. "Any time you move above ($100 a barrel), you're going to ignite some fresh buying."

Investors who recently were selling on weak economic data seemed to take a spate of bad news in stride.

The Conference Board, a business-backed research group, reported its Consumer Confidence Index fell to the lowest since February 2003, far below what analysts had been expecting, indicating that consumers might continue to curb their spending in the coming months.

Job worries sink consumer confidence

NEW YORK (AP)—Consumer confidence plunged in February as Americans worried about less-favorable business conditions and job prospects, a business-backed research group said Tuesday.

The Conference Board said its Consumer Confidence Index fell to 75 this month from a revised 87.3 in January.

The reading was the lowest since the index registered 64.8 in February 2003, just before the U.S. invaded Iraq, researchers said, and was far below the 83 expected by analysts surveyed by Thomson/IFR.

The index measures how consumers feel about the economy. It has been weakening since July, suggesting that wary consumers may retrench financially, which could fatigue the economy further.

The expectations index, which measures consumers' outlook over the next six months, fared even worse. The expectations index dropped to 57.9 from 69.3 in January. The February figure was a 17-year low, the Conference Board said, standing just a bit above the 55.3 of January 1991.

In midmorning trading, the Dow Jones industrial average rose 17.99, or 0.14 percent, to 12,588.21. Broader indexes, including the Nasdaq composite and Standard & Poor's 500, were down.

Lynn Franco, director of The Conference Board's Consumer Research Center, said in a statement that the consumer confidence survey—which is based on a sample of 5,000 U.S. households—indicated that consumers felt economic conditions were deteriorating.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Reports reflect bleak housing picture

NEW YORK (AP)—House prices may still have a long way to fall. Across much of the nation, home values are dropping—even those backed by solid mortgages—and banks are repossessing more every day. Most experts say the dive won't hit bottom for another year and only after excess inventory is sharply reduced and credit markets improve. More government intervention may be needed, too, if the free market system doesn't work quick enough. U.S. home prices dropped 8.9 percent in the final quarter of 2007 compared with a year ago, according to the Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller home price index released Tuesday. That marked the steepest decline in the index's 20-year history. Meanwhile, the narrower Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight said Tuesday that nationwide prices dipped 0.3 percent in the fourth quarter, the first annual decline in 16 years.

Wall Street lifts on IBM stock buyback

NEW YORK (AP)—Wall Street reversed earlier losses and rallied Tuesday after IBM approved a $15 billion stock buyback, suggesting to investors that there are still some companies out there with financial muscle. The Dow Jones industrial average rose more than 110 points. The Dow rose 114.70, or 0.91 percent, to 12,684.92, after declining in earlier trading. Broader stock indicators also advanced. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 9.49, or 0.69 percent, to 1,381.29, and the Nasdaq composite index rose 17.51, or 0.75 percent, to 2,344.99. Government bonds rose. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note, which moves opposite its price, slipped to 3.86 percent from 3.91 percent late Monday.

Delta execs say no combination deal yet

ATLANTA (AP)—Delta Air Lines Inc.'s top two executives told employees Tuesday that the nation's No. 3 carrier has not yet arrived at a potential combination transaction that meets all of its principles. The memo to employees from Delta Chief Executive Richard Anderson and President Ed Bastian was issued as talks between the Atlanta-based company and Eagan, Minn.-based Northwest Airlines Corp. have been hampered by an inability by their pilots unions to reach a deal on integrating seniority lists. The executives said the company's criteria for any potential deal include protecting the seniority of Delta employees and creating greater job security.

Home Depot has first annual sales dip

ATLANTA (AP)—Hobbled by the housing slump and a loss of market share, The Home Depot Inc. posted its first ever annual sales decline Tuesday and released a 2008 outlook that is more gloomy than that of its chief rival, Lowe's. The Atlanta-based company, reporting fourth-quarter profits had declined more than 27 percent, said an earlier halt to a program to buy back up to $22.5 billion in Home Depot stock will continue until markets improve. Home Depot appeased some investors with plans to significantly cut back the number of new store openings. The home improvement industry has suffered as consumers pulled back on renovations in the face of declining home values.

Sales slowdown drags on Target 4Q profit

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Target said fourth-quarter profits slipped on poor holiday sales and a quirk in the earnings calendar, but results were slightly better than Wall Street had expected amid a dismal period for retailers. The discount-store operator said Tuesday that earnings fell 8 percent to $1.03 billion, or $1.23 per share, from $1.12 billion, or $1.29 per share last year. Analysts polled by Thomson Financial were expecting $1.22 per share. Revenue edged up nearly 1 percent to $19.87 billion, from $19.71 billion last year. Analysts expected revenue of $20 billion.

STOCK Portfolio

ASIAN MARKETS

AUSTRALIA	5,842.900 Up 97.100 (+1.69%)
HONG KONG	24,603.85 Up 889.10 (+3.75%)
JAKARTA	2,746.814 Up 7.942 (+0.29%)
TOKYO	14,063.10 Up 238.38 (+1.72%)
K. LUMPUR	1,375.43 Up 4.64 (+0.34%)
MANILA	3,105.00 Up 25.46 (+0.83%)
SINGAPORE	3,127.66 Up 49.83 (+1.62%)
SEOUL	1,729.78 Up 20.65 (+1.21%)
BANGKOK	835.60 Up 0.93 (+0.11%)

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	12,684.92 +114.70
NASDAQ	2,344.99 +17.51
S&P	1,381.29 +9.49

MONEY MARKET

Australian Dollar	1.0701
British Pound	0.5035
Canadian Dollar	0.9809
Chinese Renmbi	7.1467
Euro	0.667
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7893
Indian Rupee	39.719
Indonesian Rupiah	9064
Japanese Yen	107.065
Malaysian Ringgit	3.2025
New Zealand Dollar	1.2274
Philippine Peso	40.41
Singapore Dollar	1.4012
South Korean Won	943.15
Swiss Franc	1.0746
Taiwan Dollar	31.006
Thailand Baht	30.265

In U.S. dollar terms

Source: Associated Press

Nation

Clinton, Obama in crackling debate

CLEVELAND (AP) -- Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama clashed over trade, health care and the war in Iraq Tuesday night in a crackling debate at close quarters one week before a pivotal group of primaries. Charges of negative campaign tactics were high on the program, too.

"Senator Obama has consistently said I would force people to have health care whether they can afford it or not," said Clinton, insisting it was not true.

Responding quickly, Obama countered that former first lady had consistently claimed his plan "would leave 15 million people out ... I dispute that. I think it is inaccurate," he said.

The tone was polite yet pointed, increasingly so as the 90-minute session wore on, a reflection of the stakes in a race in which Obama has won 11 straight primaries and caucuses and Clinton is in desperate need of a comeback.

Clinton also said as far as she knew her campaign had nothing to do with circulating a photograph of Obama wearing a white turban and a wraparound white robe presented to him by elders in Wajir, in northeastern Kenya.

The gossip and news Web site The Drudge Report posted the photograph Monday and said, without substantiation, that it was being circulated by "Clinton staffers."

AP

Democratic presidential hopefuls Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., left, and Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., shake hands after a Democratic presidential debate Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008, in Cleveland.

"We have no evidence where it came from," Clinton said, making clear that's not the kind of behavior she wants in her campaign.

"I take Senator Clinton at her word that she knew nothing about the photo," Obama said.

The two rivals, the only survivors of a grueling primary season, sat about a foot apart at a table on stage at Cleveland State University. It was the 20th debate of the campaign, 10 months to the day after the first.

The race was far different in April 2007, Clinton the frontrunner by far. Now Obama holds that place, both in terms of contests and delegates won.

Pet sterilization becomes law in LA

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa on Tuesday signed one of the nation's toughest laws on pet sterilization, requiring most dogs and cats to be spayed or neutered by the time they are 4 months old.

The ordinance is aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating the thousands of euthanizations conducted in Los Angeles' animal shelters every year.

"We will, sooner rather than later, become a no-kill city and this is the greatest step in that direction," Councilman Tony Cardenas said as he held a kitten at a City Hall news conference.

Councilman Richard Alarcon, who like Cardenas is a co-author of the bill, brought his two pet Chihuahuas to the event to be neutered in a van operated by the city.

The ordinance does exempt some animals, including those that have competed in shows or sporting competitions, guide dogs, animals used by police agencies and those belonging to professional breeders.

The average pet owner, however, must have their dog or cat spayed or neutered by the time it reaches 4 months of age (as late as 6 months with a letter from a veterinarian). People with older unneutered pets and newcomers to the city with animals also have to obey the law.

Senate advances bill to cut Iraq funding

WASHINGTON (AP)—In an about-face, Senate Republicans on Tuesday agreed with Democrats to advance an anti-war bill because they said the debate would give them time to hail progress in Iraq.

The change of heart came after months of blocking similar measures. But unlike most of last year, security conditions in Iraq have improved, and Republicans say they now feel they have the upper hand on the debate.

"We welcome a discussion about Iraq," Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell declared.

The measure, by Democratic Sens. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin and Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, would cut off money for combat after 120 days. It had been expected to fall short of the 60 votes needed to overcome a procedural hurdle and move ahead.

But after Republicans agreed in a private meeting that the debate could help make their case, the Senate voted 70-24 to begin debating it in earnest.

Aides said a final vote could come later this week, but may be pushed into next week.

The White House said the president would veto such a measure.

"This legislation would substitute the political judgment of legislators for the considered professional military judgment of our military commanders," the administration said in a statement.

Democrats said they welcomed the debate, although they accused Republicans of stalling on plans to debate other issues, namely the nation's housing crisis.

Reid said "a civil war rages" in Iraq and shouldn't be the responsibility of U.S. taxpayers.

"Americans need to start taking care of Americans," he said. "We cannot spend a half billion dollars every day in Iraq."

In recent months, violence in Iraq has subsided significantly and the Baghdad government has made small steps toward political reconciliation, including plans to hold provincial elections on Oct. 1.

While Democratic voters remain largely against the war, polls have shown, the security improvement has helped to cool anxiety among Republicans and turned voters' focus to economic problems at home.

Expert details White House e-mail risks

WASHINGTON (AP)—A computer expert who worked at the White House provided the first inside look at its e-mail system Tuesday, calling it a "primitive" setup that created a high risk that data would be lost.

Steven McDevitt's written statements, placed on the public record at a congressional hearing, asserted that a study by White House technical staff in October 2005 turned up an estimated 1,000 days on which e-mail was missing.

Two federal laws require electronic messages to be preserved.

Before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, the White House defended the Bush administration's handling of its electronic messages.

"We are very energized about getting to the bottom of this," testified Theresa Payton, chief information officer at the White House Office of Administration.

"This is a form of sandbagging," replied Oversight Committee Chairman Henry Waxman, D-Calif., who pointed out that by the time the White House fixes its e-mail problems, "you'll be out of office."

In his written statements, McDevitt said he participated in meetings with White House counsel Harriet Miers and members of her staff. The meetings, in December 2005 and early 2006, occurred around the time McDevitt and other technical staffers were trying to determine how much e-mail was missing from the White House.

In a report presented at the hearing, Waxman's Democratic staff said difficulties arose in recovering e-mails for Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald in the CIA leak probe. Fitzgerald publicly disclosed the fact that the White House had an e-mail problem in early 2006.

ACROSS THE NATION

Power back on after outages hit Fla.

MIAMI (AP)—Florida's largest utility says equipment failure and a fire at a Miami substation led to power outages that affected up to 3 million people. Florida Power & Light is still trying to determine what caused the failure and fire. The company says such equipment failure should not have caused the widespread blackouts. The problem caused a nuclear plant south of Miami to automatically shut down. Officials with the company say just about 20,000 people remained without power by 5:30 p.m. Most of those were due to outages caused by storms.

Jury begins deliberating in ex-cop case

CANTON, Ohio (AP)—A jury began deciding Tuesday whether a former police officer convicted of killing his pregnant girlfriend and their unborn daughter should get the death penalty. Bobby Cutts Jr. was led from the courtroom by sheriff's deputies after the jurors began deliberations. The jury, which convicted Cutts earlier this month, broke for dinner and was to resume deliberations Wednesday. A sobbing Cutts appealed to the jury Monday to spare his life. He said he took responsibility for the deaths of 26-year-old Jessie Davis and the couple's unborn daughter last June. Assistant Stark County prosecutor Dennis Barr told jurors Tuesday that the state had met its burden to prove that Cutts deserves to die.

Polygamist leader faces Ariz. charges

KINGMAN, Ariz. (AP)—Polygamist sect leader Warren Jeffs was handed over to Arizona authorities Tuesday to face sex charges stemming from the arranged marriages of two teenage girls to older relatives. He already has been convicted in Utah in connection with one of those cases, involving a 14-year-old girl. Deputies from the Mohave County Sheriff's Office took custody of Jeffs from Utah officials, sheriff's spokeswoman Trish Carter said. Jeffs, leader of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, will plead not guilty to the Arizona charges Wednesday in a Kingman court, said defense attorney Mike Piccarreta. Jeffs, 52, is charged as an accomplice with four counts of incest and four counts of sexual contact with a minor in an indictment.

Snow, thunderstorms black out thousands

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP)—A broad storm system spread heavy snow across the Great Lakes region Tuesday and fired up violent thunderstorms that knocked out power to thousands of homes and businesses in the Southeast. At least two deaths were blamed on the stormy weather. Fallen trees and other debris on roads slowed travel and several traffic accidents brought morning rush hour traffic to a standstill in Birmingham, authorities said. A falling tree struck a mobile home and killed a 71-year-old woman in Leeds, a town outside Birmingham, The Jefferson County coroner's office said.

NYC shooting victim's father testifies

NEW YORK (AP)—The father of a man killed in a hail of police gunfire on his wedding day testified Tuesday that he saw one of the three undercover detectives on trial for the shooting in the bar where his son's bachelor party was held. On the second day of testimony in the trial, William Bell identified Marc Cooper, who is charged with reckless endangerment in the shooting of his son, Sean, early on the morning of Nov. 25, 2006. Detectives Gescard Isnora and Michael Oliver face manslaughter charges. Oliver fired 31 shots—including the one that killed the unarmed Bell—outside a Queens strip club where Sean Bell, his father and friends were celebrating Bell's impending wedding. Isnora fired 11 shots and Cooper fired four times.

Ministers: Police destroyed Klan records

GREENSBORO, N.C. (AP)—Three ministers accused a Greensboro police officer Tuesday of ordering officers to destroy about 50 boxes of police files related to the fatal shooting of five people at an anti-Ku Klux Klan rally in 1979. The Revs. Cardes Brown, Gregory Headen and Nelson Johnson said an active-duty officer told them he and at least three other officers were told to destroy the records in 2004 or 2005, shortly after a seven-member panel convened to research the shootings requested police files related to them. The News & Record of Greensboro reported that the order came from Sgt. Craig McMinn in the department's Special Intelligence Unit. The ministers didn't identify the officer who provided the information. On the morning of Nov. 3, 1979, a heavily armed caravan of Klansman and Nazi party members confronted the rally. Five marchers were killed and 10 were injured.

Asia

RP bishops slam corruption

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Influential Philippine Roman Catholic bishops slammed endemic government corruption Tuesday but stopped short of urging President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to resign.

The statement by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, issued after a 10-hour emergency meeting, was a small victory for Arroyo's efforts to serve out the last two years of her term amid widespread calls for her to step down.

■■■

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Activists criticized Roman Catholic bishops Wednesday for failing to join their calls for President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's resignation, and set another rally to keep up the pressure on her.

The bishops' group "refuses to acknowledge the roots of corruption," said Renato Reyes, secretary general of the largest left-wing umbrella, Bayan.

He said the group's statement was "like asking the Abu Sayyaf to lead the fight against kidnapping," a reference to al-Qaida-linked extremists in the southern Philippines who regularly kidnap hostages.

■■■

The bishops' group has played a key role in nonviolent revolts that ousted two leaders in the last two decades, and a strong statement against Arroyo could have bolstered protests against her.

RP police: coup plot uncovered

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Philippine police said Tuesday they have received reliable intelligence reports of a possible public uprising being organized by junior military officers and others to overthrow the government.

Police cited the reports in seeking postponement of Wednesday's scheduled arraignment of an opposition senator, a former Scout Ranger commander and 16 other soldiers charged with rebellion for a takeover last year of a five-star hotel that was aimed at triggering an uprising against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Chief Inspector Joel Manuel Ana, in the court motion, said the accused men posed a very serious threat, especially if they were to "come out in the open and be exposed to the media at this very critical point in time."

Makati Regional Trial Judge Elmo Alameda granted the request in the arraignment of detained Sen. Antonio Trillanes, a former navy officer, who also is facing charges of mutiny for a separate rebellion in 2003.

Musical diplomacy, and tears, in NKorea

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP)—The New York Philharmonic's unprecedented concert could herald warmer ties between North Korea and the United States. After three encores, some musicians left the stage in tears as the audience waved fondly.

Between horn fanfares and the flourishes of the conductor's baton, the U.S. and North Korea found common ground in a concert Tuesday that spanned American and Korean musical traditions.

Whether the feeling lingers after the music will depend on the North's compliance with an international push to rid it of nuclear weapons.

After the New York Philharmonic played the last notes of the folk song "Arirang," the adoring audience stood and applauded enthusiastically, waving to the musicians.

AP

The audience stands for the National Anthem of the United States at the start of a concert by the New York Philharmonic in Pyongyang, North Korea on Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Al-Qaida suspect held over Bhutto attack

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Pakistan has arrested a suspected al-Qaida militant who slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto named before her death as one of those involved in an attempt on her life in October, a senior government official said Tuesday. Qari Saifullah Akhtar, who has been in Pakistani custody before, was arrested Monday in the eastern city of Lahore for alleged involvement in the October suicide bombing in Karachi that hit Bhutto's homecoming parade when she returned from exile, Interior Minister Hamid Nawaz said. The bombing narrowly missed Bhutto but killed about 150 others. Bhutto was killed in a subsequent suicide attack on Dec. 27 in Rawalpindi near the capital Islamabad.

Indonesian region struck by quakes

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—The fault line that spawned the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami has ruptured nearly 20 times this month, causing three strong earthquakes. The activity shows the stress the seam is under and could be a harbinger of worse to come, scientists warn. Kerry Sieh, from the California Institute of Technology, has studied the fault for more than 10 years. Sieh and other scientists using Global Positioning System transmitters to measure the uplift of the quakes say another massive temblor sometime in the next 100 years or so is likely, but they cannot predict exactly when that will occur. The fault line is the boundary between the Eurasian and Pacific tectonic plates that have been pushing against each other for millions of years, causing huge pressure to build up. It runs the length of the west coast of Sumatra about 125 miles offshore.

Myanmar enacts law on constitution vote

YANGON, Myanmar (AP)—Myanmar's military government said Tuesday that it had set the rules for a referendum on a new constitution, a step on a purported "roadmap to democracy" that critics call a sham. The announcement broadcast on state TV and radio evening news said the junta had passed a law covering the matters such as the preparation of electoral rolls, vote counting and postponement and cancellation of voting. Planning for the vote has been widely criticized for failing to include any input from opponents of military rule, and critics says the new charter is aimed at perpetuating army control.

World

Iraq: Troubled northern regions flare up

BAGHDAD(AP)—Insurgents targeted passenger buses north of Baghdad on Tuesday, as a suicide bomber killed at least eight people west of Mosul and gunmen seized 21 men traveling through Diyala province.

The latest bloodshed highlighted the slow-going, punch-counterpunch U.S.-led campaign against al-Qaida in Iraq, more than a month after Iraq's prime minister said he expected the fight for Mosul would be a "decisive battle."

The Americans view the northern campaign as a chance to subdue al-Qaida in Iraq in areas surrounding Mosul, a major transportation hub which the military has described as the terror group's last urban stronghold.

Tuesday's bombing, 40 miles west of Mosul, struck a bus heading from that city to the Syrian capital of Damascus.

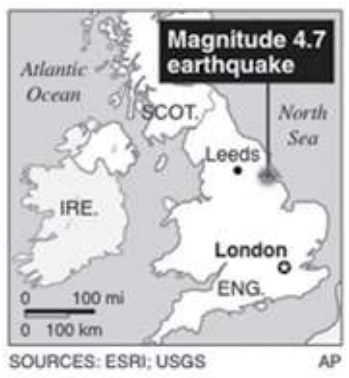
Al-Qaida is believed to use the cover of sprawling sheep and produce markets in Mosul to smuggle foreign fighters, weapons and cash from Syria. Mosul, the country's third-largest city, lies some 80 miles east of the Syrian border and 225 miles northwest of Baghdad.

Farther north, Turkish officials said Tuesday their troops pressed an incursion deeper into Iraq, as they chased separatist Kurdish rebels as much as 12 miles across that border. Fed-up Iraqi leaders demanded that Turkey end the military operation, and the regional parliament in Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish area unanimously approved a measure authorizing its military forces to fight back if attacked by Turks.

The south, however, was relatively calm. There, millions of black-clad pilgrims clogged the streets of Karbala for the peak of an annual religious commemoration for a revered Shiite figure. A nationwide pilgrimage to the city was marred by attacks earlier in the week that killed at least 63 people.

Earthquake felt in parts of Britain

MANCHESTER, England (AP)—The strongest earthquake to hit Britain in more than two decades was felt across large parts of the country early Wednesday, officials said. Some homes had minor damage but there were no reports of injuries.



SOURCES: ESRI; USGS AP

The British Geological Survey said the 5.3-magnitude quake struck at about 1 a.m. and was centered about 125 miles north of London.

Julian Bukits of the British Geological Survey called it the most powerful quake in Britain since a 5.4 temblor hit North Wales in 1984.

"This was a very large earthquake in UK terms, but in world terms average," Bukits told The Associated Press. "This one has been felt throughout the whole of England and southern Scotland."

Many people across the region - unaccustomed to such quakes - reported feeling their homes shaken.

"It was scary," David Somerset told The Associated Press by telephone from Driffield, around 60 miles from the epicenter. He was working on the computer at the time.

"It was a strange sensation as the room, ornaments and chest of drawers started wobbling and making a loud rumbling noise," he said.

Lincolnshire police said they had received dozens of phone calls about the temblor and that some minor damage to homes had been reported.

"This is a moderate earthquake," Rafael Abreu of the U.S. Geological Survey told Sky News from the United States.

Serbs bury US Embassy fire victim

NOVI SAD, Serbia (AP)—Thousands of Serbs gathered Tuesday to bury a 20-year-old engineering student killed when a mob set fire to the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade during protests last week over Kosovo's independence.

Students, teachers and relatives wept as they spoke of Zoran Vujovic while surrounding his flower-laden white casket in Novi Sad, about 50 miles north of Belgrade.

Shocked relatives said he wanted only to protest U.S. support for Kosovo's secession.

"His motive was only to protest Kosovo," said Zoran's uncle, Milorad Vujovic.

Meanwhile, violence continued in other Serb-dominated regions in the Balkans. In nearby Bosnia, police fired tear gas to prevent Bosnian Serb rioters from storming the U.S. consulate in Banja Luka, located in the ethnically divided country's Serbian area.

The rioters had split away from some 10,000 peaceful protesters, breaking shop windows and throwing stones at police who used armored vehicles to block their way to the consulate, which had been closed temporarily since last week.

Serbia's leaders in Belgrade said they would study their options for dealing with countries that have recognized Kosovo—which Serbs consider the heart of their ancient homeland and Orthodox Christian faith.

WHO says drug-resistant TB spreads fast

LONDON (AP)—Drug-resistant tuberculosis is spreading even faster than medical experts had feared, the World Health Organization warned in report issued Tuesday. The rate of TB patients infected with the drug-resistant strain topped 20 percent in some countries, the highest ever recorded, the U.N. agency said.

"Ten years ago, it would have been unthinkable to see rates like this," said Dr. Mario Raviglione, director of WHO's "Stop TB" department. "This demonstrates what happens when you keep making mistakes in TB treatment."

Though the report is the largest survey of drug-resistant TB, based on information collected between 2002 and 2006, there are still major gaps: Data were only available from about half of the world's countries.

In Africa, where experts are particularly worried about a lethal collision between TB and AIDS, only six countries provided information.

"We really don't know what the situation is in Africa," Raviglione said. "If multi-drug resistant TB has penetrated Africa and coincides with AIDS, there's bound to be a disaster."

Raviglione said it was likely that patients—and even entire outbreaks of drug-resistant TB—were being missed.

Experts also worry about the spread of XDR-TB, or extensively drug-resistant TB, a strain virtually untreatable in poor countries. When an XDR-TB outbreak was identified in AIDS patients in South Africa in 2006, it killed nearly every patient within weeks. WHO's report said XDR-TB has now been found in 45 countries.

Environment

A woman works at a fish market Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2008. AP

Limiting fish catch to largest specimens may tilt evolution

By RANDOLPH E. SCHMID
AP SCIENCE WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Rules that allow only the catching of larger fish may encourage their replacement with slower growing, more timid varieties.

That, at least, is the concern of researchers who studied test populations in two artificial lakes and report their findings in this week's edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Peter A. Biro of the department of environmental science at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, explained that it's the fast-growing more aggressive fish that tend to get caught, removing them from the breeding pool.

That leaves reproduction up to slower-growing fish who are more timid, he explained in an interview via e-mail.

"This will cause evolution to slower growth rates and slow the rate of recovery for fished populations, and could explain why fisheries tend not to rebound in the manner we expect after we reduce harvest or close a fishery," he said.

"What surprised me was how fast it occurred," Biro said. He said the largest catch occurred on the first day of fishing.

Biro and his colleague, John R. Post, stocked two lakes in western Canada with different types of rainbow trout—one type was known to be aggressive in seeking food and to grow rapidly, while the other grew more slowly and tended to take fewer risks in foraging.

They set gillnets in the ponds over five days, moving them each day, and caught 50 percent of the stocked fast-growing fish but just 30 percent of the more cautious ones.

"Fish that are highly active and bold tend to bump into these nets more often and are less likely to avoid them," he explained. And increased activity is necessary to get enough food for rapid growth.

China plastic bags factory closes

BEIJING (AP)—China's largest producer of plastic bags said Tuesday it has closed more than a month after the government announced a high-profile ban on stores handing out free bags in an effort to clean up the environment.

Huaqiang factory, in central Henan province, closed at the beginning of February, said a woman who answered the telephone at the factory. All 10,000 workers at the factory were sent home, said the woman, who gave only her family name, Hai, as is common in China.

Last month, China announced a ban on stores handing out free plastic shopping bags in a bid to cut waste and conserve resources. The ban takes effect June 1, two months before Beijing hosts the Summer Olympic Games, and will eliminate the flimsiest bags and force stores to charge to more durable bags.

The measure was announced by the State Council, China's Cabinet. The Huaqiang closure indicates the measure is being followed.

Many environmental regulations in China fail because of opposition from local governments, which receive tax and other revenues from local factories and are reluctant to shut them down.

The Huaqiang factory will sell its equipment and raw materials, Hai said.

Management was not immediately available for comment Tuesday. Phones at the local commerce bureau were not answered.

The factory, owned by Nanqiang Plastic Industrial Ltd., of

New multimedia portal at EPA.gov

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Monday launched its new web multimedia portal: www.epa.gov/multimedia. The multimedia portal is EPA's one-stop location for environmental video, audio/podcasts, and photography.

The portal also includes interactive features such as "Ask EPA" and the Deputy Administrator's blog, "Flow of the River." Another feature called "EPA in Action" goes behind-the-scenes; following the diverse jobs performed by the EPA workforce and examines some of the most pressing environmental issues facing the nation today.

Viewing video is integrated into the site using flash player, while photos of events and EPA work will be posted in a series of online galleries. Users may also subscribe to several podcast series or select from a number of individual podcasts featuring EPA experts and senior officials.

This new multimedia portal is an important resource for the public, journalists, academia, local governments and the environmental community. The portal will help increase awareness of important news items through an intuitive, media-rich focus, rather than through traditional electronic print. ***(EPA)***

Life & Style

Designers au naturel

PARIS (AP)—As rain clouds gathered over Paris on Tuesday, fashion designers drew inspiration from nature for outfits intended to brave the elements next fall.

French designer Jean Paul Gaultier, fresh from dressing best-actress winner Marion Cotillard for the Oscars in a mermaid gown, delved further into fairy tale land in search of the big bad wolf.

From full-length foxes draped across the body to zebra-printed outercoats, this collection was all about fur.

"I am perfectly willing to use fake fur - and actually there is some in the collection - but some furs are totally inimitable," Gaultier said after the show. "And I have to say that I eat meat."

Gaultier provided plenty of status symbols, from the mink coats with rhinestone mesh panels to the power-shouldered pinstripe suits and the rows of pearl beading on swinging cocktail dresses.

Italian model Mariacarla Boscono gave Little Red Riding Hood a naughty twist, pairing her flowing red silk cape with matching elbow-length leather gloves.

Japanese designer Dai Fujiwara worked delicate shapes like bird wings and crystals into his collection for Issey Miyake, which was inspired by a wedding and a funeral.

It included a prototype of the gown he made for the wedding this week of a Finnish couple as part of an international design project. The sleeveless dress folds flat into a hexagon shape.

Models carrying wind chimes paraded in gray and black mourning suits woven with glistening strips, while a sequence of ethereal white dresses were made of disposable cloth.

AP
A model wears a creation by French fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier for his Fall-Winter 2008-2009 ready-to-wear collection presented in Paris, Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008.

Fujiwara said he was reacting to the recent death of a friend, whose funeral he felt was rushed. The care and attention he brought to this collection were a fitting homage.

British design duo Eley Kishimoto showcased the perfect solution to the drizzly weather in its window display at Cacharel's flagship store on the Left Bank - a trench coat with a stripy cloud motif.

However, eager buyers will have to wait until fall to snap up their first collection for the historic French label, which is seeking a facelift for its 50th anniversary this year.

The print specialists—British designer Mark Eley and his Japanese partner Wakako Kishimoto—offered up everything from "good girl" duffle coats to flirty cocktail dresses in cute patterns including an Eiffel Tower sketch.

AP
Actress Pamela Anderson poses at the Brigitte Bardot Foundation in Paris, in this Feb. 14, 2008, file photo, during a protest against seal hunting in Canada.

Anderson seeks to annul 2-month marriage

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Court documents show that Pamela Anderson is seeking an annulment, rather than a divorce, from husband Rick Salomon. The actress is seeking to annul the two-month marriage based on fraud. No other details were available, and Anderson's publicist did not immediately return an e-mail request for comment Tuesday.

In court papers filed in Los Angeles on Friday, Anderson asked the court not to award spousal support and to keep her and Salomon's income and property separate. On Monday, Anderson filed a request to have a retired judge handle the annulment proceedings—a common practice in celebrity split-ups as it keeps matters private and out of the court.

Anderson and Salomon, both 40, were married Oct. 6 in Las Vegas and separated Dec. 13. He's best known for making a sex videotape with then-girlfriend Paris Hilton and was previously married to actress Shannen Doherty.

Anderson was previously married to singer Kid Rock and Motley Crue drummer Tommy Lee.

Diablo Cody pays the price of fame, too

NEW YORK (AP)—Being the most famous stripper-turned-screenwriter in the world isn't always as pleasant as it may sound.

Diablo Cody, whose blog-to-riches fairy tale culminated in an Academy Award win for "Juno," has spent the past few months dominating a tiny little niche of Hollywood stardom: the celebrity writer. Not even wordsmith heavies Paul Haggis, Wes Anderson or Charlie Kaufman have stood in a spotlight so bright—but then, none of them had the allure of a pole-dancing past, punkish attitude or surprising smash-hit, Oscar-worthy pregnancy comedy.

And in Cody's case, there's a downside: The very things that make her star unique are suddenly being panned and scrutinized. From tabloid newspapers to well-trafficked celeb- and media-sniping blogs, Cody's meteoric rise has made her something of a target.

The first-time scriptwriter from Lemont, Ill., demonstrated her no-nonsense, rebellious personality last week when she took to her MySpace blog to vent about the $1 million diamond-laced shoes designed for her by Stuart Weitzman to wear on Oscar's red carpet.

"They're using me to publicize their stupid shoes and NOBODY ASKED ME," wrote Cody, who ultimately wore gold flats. "I would never consent to a lame publicity stunt at a time when I already want to hide."

AP

Writer Diablo Cody accepts the Oscar for best original screenplay for her work on "Juno" at the 80th Academy Awards in this Feb. 24, 2008 file photo in Los Angeles.

Cody, who has been unapologetic and candid about her colorful life, drew praise in the blogosphere for her remarks at the time. But in the days that followed, Weitzman told the celebrity Web site TMZ that Cody actually selected the shoes herself, and bloggers (and subsequent commenters) had their fun calling her out for what they saw as diva behavior.

The New York Post chose a picture of Cody for its after-Oscars cover that prominently featured her bikini-clad stripper tattoo. The headline: Who's Tat Girl! And on Tuesday, Photos of a scantily clad Cody surfaced on the Web site Egotastic—nothing new, considering she's posted scantily clad photos of herself before.

With her Oscar firmly in hand, Diablo is laying low for now. She is "out of town," spending her time writing—and won't be available for media interviews "for the foreseeable future," her representative, Craig Bankey, told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Earlier this month, the Web site Something Awful posted three pages of a fake Cody screenplay called "Quotey" that mocked the hipster wordplay she showcased in "Juno," which had the oft-mocked line: "Honest to blog?"

And right before the Oscars, New York comedian Jackie Clarke released a video impersonation of Cody, complete with the writer's trademark black bob. In it, Clarke-as-Cody quipped: "Hey, did I ever tell you I used to be a stripper?"

"Everybody was ... rallying behind her before 'Juno' hit $125 million at the box office, and now comes the inevitable backlash where they see her selling out to Hollywood," observed Tom O'Neil, a columnist for the Los Angeles Times' "The Envelope" Web site.

"She always seemed like a rebel, a social rebel who now seems to have cashed in and joined the club. And I think what we're witnessing is resentment to that," said O'Neil, who noted that Cody's raunchy backstory likely proved irresistible to Hollywood types who don't get a chance to show their bohemian, darker sides in public.

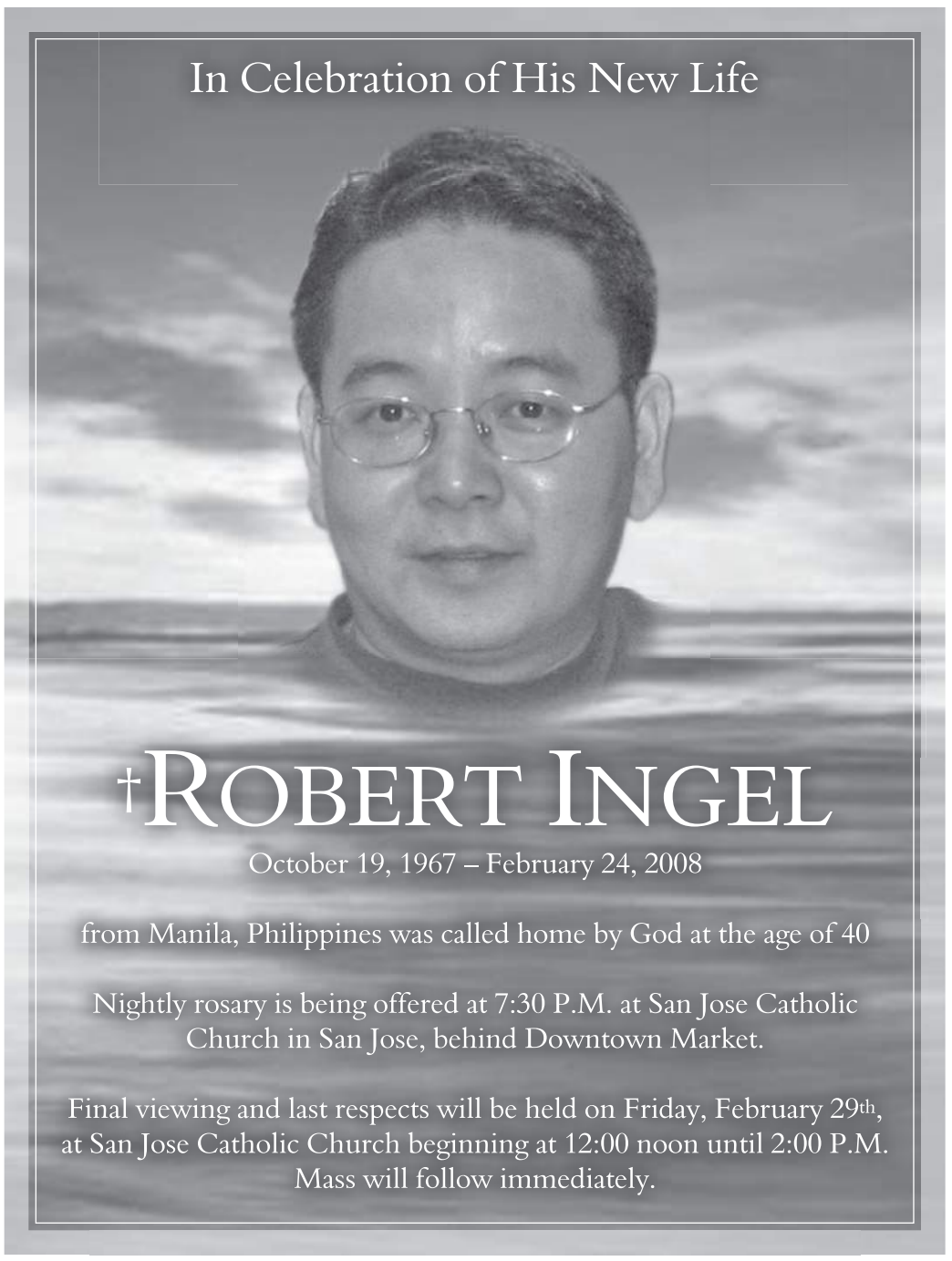
O'Neil called Cody's rise a "naughty Cinderella" story. Cody, whose real name is Brook Busey, caught the eye of manager Mason Novick after he found her sexy blog while surfing for porn online several years ago. She wrote a memoir about her year as a stripper in Minneapolis—and whipped up "Juno" on a laptop at a Starbucks in a Target store.

Cody's new projects include the Steven Spielberg-produced "The United States of Tara" for Showtime, featuring Toni Collette as a mom with split personalities, and the horror film "Jennifer's Body," which counts "Juno" director Jason Reitman among the producers. She's also taking a turn as a backpage pop-culture columnist for the magazine Entertainment Weekly.

"She was wooed by Hollywood from the start to join them," O'Neil said. "And once she did, then they exalted her. She became the ultimate epitome of Hollywood's free spirit."

Movie critic Robert Wilonsky of the Dallas Observer thinks potshots against Cody are rooted in jealousy.

"She deserves what she has coming to her," Wilonsky said. "This is not accidental and it's not undeserved. Anyone who says otherwise is just a would-be screenwriter with a movie script sitting in their desk that nobody has any interest in."


In Celebration of His New Life
†ROBERT INGEL
October 19, 1967 – February 24, 2008
from Manila, Philippines was called home by God at the age of 40
Nightly rosary is being offered at 7:30 P.M. at San Jose Catholic Church in San Jose, behind Downtown Market.
Final viewing and last respects will be held on Friday, February 29th, at San Jose Catholic Church beginning at 12:00 noon until 2:00 P.M. Mass will follow immediately.

In Poland, 'Unmentionables' on display

OPATOWEK, Poland (AP)—Victoria has no secrets in this Polish town.

In an exhibition that's making some Poles do a double-take, the Museum of Industry in Opatowek has chronicled the evolution of women's underwear from the knee-length knickers and tight corsets of the early 20th century to the skimpy thongs of today.

"Undergarments were pretty much kept well out of sight in the old days," said Ewa Sieranska, curator at the Central Textile Museum in Lodz, which loaned 140 items to the exhibit called "From Pantaloons to G-Strings."

"At the beginning of the 20th century you couldn't show them at all, and later only a little bit, whereas now they're everywhere," she added.

Female underwear evolved as women's role in society changed.

The frumpy drawers of the early 20th century gave way to more modern styles in the 1920s—including garter belts to hold up the stockings of women entering the workplace.

Among notable items on display in this town 150 miles east of Warsaw is a white garter belt with pink hearts and clasps to attach to silk stockings, a style popular before pantyhose were developed in the 1960s.

There are also pantaloons (knee-long cotton underwear with lace fringe), day shirts, night gowns and two-piece corsets.

Nylon rose in popularity in the 1970s, while natural materials like cotton hold sway today.

In the 1980s, when Poland's then-communist regime was staggering from one political and economic crisis to the next, so-called "tygodniowki," which came in packages of seven—a pair for each day of the week—were the standard cotton undies for women.

The exhibition, which opened in January and runs until the end of March, is sprinkled with a few items of male clothing—boxer shorts, robes and a jock strap from the 1930s.

But male underwear has changed little over the years, and the vast majority of the collection is made up of what once was known as women's unmentionables.

"When people came to see the exhibition after it first opened, it caused a range of different reactions," said museum curator Ewa Klysz. "But these items are subject to historical research, and this is a serious exhibit."

Serious it may be, but it is also proved entertaining.

"It's great," said Klaudia Kepa, 15, who visited the museum with her high school classmates.

"You're not just learning about art or something that you can read about in a history text book, but something that's important, well, every day."

The underwear did generate a fair amount of giggling among the three other groups of students that visited the museum on Valentine's Day.

Older visitors, however, tend to take a different spin on things.

"They want to see some things they aren't familiar with, or remember items that they once wore," Klysz said. "Sometimes they say, 'Oh, I used to wear that, or, ugh, those were horribly uncomfortable.'"

AP

A schoolboy tours the exhibition "From Pantaloons to G-strings" at the Museum of Industry in Opatowek, central Poland, Thursday, Feb. 14, 2008.

AP

Singer Billy Ray Cyrus, left, and his daughter Miley Cyrus, pose together at the premiere of Disney Channel's "High School Musical 2" in Anaheim, Calif., in this Aug. 14, 2007, file photo.

Miley, Billy Ray Cyrus host CMT Awards

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Billy Ray Cyrus and daughter Miley will host and perform at the 2008 CMT Music Awards.

The seventh annual awards show will air live April 14 on CMT from Belmont University's Curb Event Center. Alan Jackson, Brad Paisley, Carrie Underwood, Sugarland, Taylor Swift and Toby Keith will also be among the performers.

"Miley and I are so excited to be hosting the CMT Music Awards," Cyrus said Tuesday in a statement. "We know it will be a fun-filled night with a lot of great music performances."

Cyrus, 46, made it big on the country and pop charts in 1992 with his hit "Achy Breaky Heart." These days, he plays Miley's father on the 15-year-old actress-singer's "Hannah Montana" TV show.

"Hannah Montana" is filmed in Los Angeles, but the family has a home near Nashville. The Disney Channel recently announced that parts of Miley's upcoming movie will be filmed in Tennessee.

The news will make the awards show a tough ticket. Miley's last concert at Nashville's Sommet Center sold out and commanded high prices in the secondary ticket market, much like her other stops nationwide.

Seinfeld seeks to toss author's lawsuit

NEW YORK (AP)—Jerry Seinfeld was just joking when he compared a woman accusing his wife of plagiarism to the killers of John Lennon and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., his lawyers said.

In a filing in U.S. District Court in Manhattan, attorneys for the former sitcom star asked a judge to throw out a lawsuit filed by Missy Chase Lapine against Seinfeld and his wife, the Daily News reported in Tuesday editions.

"Jerry Seinfeld made overstatements of opinion for comic effect," the comedian's lawyers said in the filing.

Lapine is seeking unspecified compensatory and punitive damages for copyright and trademark infringement, and made slander and defamation claims.

Lapine, the author of "The Sneaky Chef: Simple Strategies for Hiding Healthy Foods in Kids' Favorite Meals," accused Seinfeld's wife of plagiarizing her cookbook. Jessica Seinfeld's "Deceptively Delicious: Simple Secrets to Get Your Kids Eating Good Food" was published in October; Lapine's book was published in April.

AP

Jerry and Jessica Seinfeld arrives at "A Night to Benefit Raising Malawi and UNICEF" at United Nations headquarters in this Feb. 6, 2008 file photo, in New York.

Lawyers for the Seinfelds dismissed the plagiarism allegations in the court filing, saying, "The idea of sneaking healthy foods into a child's diet is not original to your author."

Lapine also contended in her lawsuit that Jerry Seinfeld, while making a promotional stop on CBS' "Late Show With David Letterman," suggested she was a crackpot by comparing her to the killers of Lennon and King.

Maxim apologizes for Black Crowes review

NEW YORK (AP)—Maxim magazine has apologized for publishing a negative review of the Black Crowes' new album by a writer who hadn't listened to the whole CD.

The review in Maxim's March issue gives the Crowes' "Warpaint" a rating of two-and-a-half stars out of five. The band posted an exasperated statement on its Web site last week saying the Maxim writer hadn't heard the entire album because advance copies weren't available. The Crowes' manager, Pete Angelus, said the magazine explained that its review was an "educated guess."

Maxim editorial director James Kaminsky responded Tuesday with this statement: "It is Maxim's editorial policy to assign star ratings only to those albums that have been heard in their entirety. Unfortunately, that policy was not followed in the March 2008 issue of our magazine and we apologize to our readers."

A spokeswoman for the magazine contacted by The Associated Press declined to say whether the writer would face disciplinary action.

"Warpaint," the Black Crowes' first album in seven years, is set for release March 4. The blues-rock group, fronted by Chris Robinson, has released only one song from the disc, "Goodbye Daughters of the Revolution."

The band's hits include "Hard to Handle" and "She Talks to Angels."

AP

Chris Robinson of the Black Crowes performs in this April 22, 2005, file photo on the opening day of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage festival in New Orleans.

Hollywood writers approve new contract

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Writers Guild of America says members have voted overwhelmingly to approve a new contract with Hollywood studios that increases payment for shows offered on the Internet.

The guild says the deal was endorsed by 93.6 pewrcent of those who voted in Los Angeles and New York.

The contract was approved through a mail-in ballot that came after members were briefed two weeks ago on the deal and voted to end the 100-day strike that devastated the entertainment industry.

Under the contract, writers will get a maximum flat fee of about $1,200 for programs streamed on the Internet during the deal's first two years and then get 2 percent of a distributor's gross in year three.

Eddie Money is going country

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP)—Eddie Money is going country.

The veteran rocker is working on an album featuring countrified remakes of some of his early hits, including "Two Tickets to Paradise" and "Hard Life." The first single from "The Other Side of Money," a new version of "Give Me Some Water" recorded in Nashville with backing vocals by Grammy winner Vince Gill and co-produced by John Ford Coley, is scheduled to be released this weekend.

The album is a production of Big 7 Records, a small country record label based in Northern California, where Money began his career.

Dennis Sanfillipo, who cofounded Big 7 with some of the millions he won in the state lottery 16 years ago, has known the gravelly voiced singer for years and helped persuade him to give country music a try.

"I knew Eddie was really well-known, but the way the country people have ingratiated him to the community is really incredible," Sanfillipo said.

Money, 58, released his last album of new music in 1999 and came out last year with a disc of 1960s soul and R&B covers.

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NOW SHOWING

Vantage Point
Friday 4:15 7:00 9:45
Saturday 1:10 4:15 7:00 9:45
Sunnday 1:10 4:15 7:00
Mon thru Thurs 4:15 7:00
Dennis Quaid, Forest Whitaker
Drama, Thriller • Rated PG13

Synopsis
Thomas Barnes and Kent Taylor are two Secret Service agents assigned to protect President Ashton at a landmark summit on the global war on terror. When President Ashton is shot moments after his arrival in Spain, chaos ensues and disparate lives collide. In the crowd is Howard Lewis, an American tourist videotaping the historic event to show his kids when he returns home. Also there is Rex, an American TV news producer who is reporting on the conference.

Witless Protection
Friday 4:25 7:10 9:35
Saturday 1:25 4:25 7:10 9:35
Sunnday 1:25 4:25 7:10
Mon thru Thurs 4:25 7:10
Larry the Cable Guy, Ivana Milicevic
Comedy, Crime • Rated PG13

Untraceable
Friday 4:30 7:05 9:55
Saturday 1:30 4:30 7:05 9:55
Sunnday 1:30 4:30 7:05
Mon thru Thurs 4:30 7:05
Diane Lane, Billy Burke
Drama, Thriller, Crime • Rated R

The Spiderwick Chronicles
Friday 4:00 7:20 9:30
Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:20 9:30
Sunnday 1:00 4:00 7:20
Mon thru Thurs 4:00 7:20
Seth Rogen, Mary-Loise Parker
Fantasy, Children • Rated PG13

Synopsis
Peculiar things start to happen the moment the Grace family (Jared, his twin brother Simon, sister Mallory and their mom) leave New York and move into the secluded old house owned by their great, great uncle Arthur Spiderwick. Unable to explain the strange disappearances and accidents that seem to be happening on a daily basis, the family blames Jared. When he, Simon and Mallory investigate what"s really going on, they uncover the fantastic truth of the Spiderwick estate and of the creatures that inhabit it.

Fool's Gold
Friday 4:10 7:15 10:00
Saturday 1:20 4:10 7:15 10:00
Sunnday 1:20 4:10 7:15
Mon thru Thurs 4:10 7:15
Matthew McConaughey, Kate Hudson
Action, Adventure • Rated PG13

Jumper
Friday 4:05 7:25 9:40
Saturday 1:05 4:05 7:25 9:40
Sunnday 1:05 4:05 7:25
Mon thru Thurs 4:05 7:25
Hayden Christensen, Samuel L. Jackson
Adventure, Sci-Fi • Rated PG13

Meet the Spartans
Friday 4:20 @ @
Saturday 1:15 4:20 @ @
Sunnday 1:15 4:20 @
Mon thru Thurs 4:20 @
Diedrich Bader, Kevin Sorbo
Comedy • Rated PG13

Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins
Friday @ 7:30 9:50
Saturday @ @ 7:30 9:50
Sunnday @ @ 7:30
Mon thru Thurs @ 7:30
Martin Lawrence, Louis C.K.
Comedy • Rated PG13

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JT will induct Madonna into hall of fame

NEW YORK (AP)—Justin Timberlake will induct Madonna into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

The "Sexyback" singer has been working with the Material Mom on her upcoming album, expected to be released this year.

Madonna will be among those honored March 10 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in Manhattan. Other inductees include Leonard Cohen, John Mellencamp, The Dave Clark Five, The Ventures and Little Walter.

Tom Hanks will induct The Dave Clark Five, the '60s British pop band behind the hit "Glad All Over." Billy Joel will pay tribute to Mellencamp, and Lou Reed will honor Cohen.

Ben Harper will induct Little Walter, who produced 14 Top 10 hits on the R&B charts before his death in 1968 at 37. John Fogerty will induct The Ventures, whose hits include "Walk Don't Run" and "Hawaii Five-O."

Singer-songwriter Jerry Butler will induct Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, founders of the Philadelphia International record label that collaborated with R&B artists such as Butler, The O'Jays, Patti LaBelle and Lou Rawls.

AP

Singer Madonna arrives at "A Night to Benefit Raising Malawi and UNICEF" at United Nations headquarters, in this Feb. 6, 2008, file photo in New York.

Campbell hospitalized for cyst removal

AP

Naomi Campbell attends the Dolce & Gabbana women's Fall/Winter 2008/2009 collection presented in Milan, Italy, in this Thursday, Feb. 21, 2008 file photo.

SAO PAULO, Brazil (AP)—Naomi Campbell was hospitalized in Sao Paulo for the removal of a small cyst, her publicist said. The 37-year-old British supermodel, a frequent visitor to Brazil who earlier this month celebrated Carnival in the northeastern city of Salvador, was treated at Sirio Libanes Hospital.

"Following the successful procedure, she is now resting and is looking forward to getting back to work. She would like to thank the doctors who have kindly looked after her," her publicist, Jeff Raymond, said in a statement Tuesday.

Dr. Jose Aristodemo Pinotti, a gynecologist, told The Associated Press by telephone that Campbell underwent abdominal surgery.

"I cannot reveal what Naomi had, nor how serious her condition was, but I can say I operated on her yesterday, that everything went smoothly and that she is completely cured and walking in her room," Pinotti said.

He described the procedure as a laparoscopy, in which doctors use a thin, lighted scope to view internal organs.

"She came to Brazil to be treated for a condition I am not authorized to reveal," he said. He declined further comment.

The hospital also declined to comment on Campbell's condition, but said she was admitted Sunday night.

Dr. David Uip, one of Brazil's leading experts in the treatment of infectious diseases, was also caring for Campbell, the hospital said.

Mischa Barton facing 4 misdemeanors

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—Mischa Barton is facing four misdemeanors related to a drinking and driving arrest last year in West Hollywood.

Court papers obtained by CelebTV.com show the former star of "The O.C." was charged Tuesday with driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, driving while having a 0.08 percent or higher blood alcohol level, driving without a valid license and possession of marijuana (28.5 grams or less).

Barton was arrested Dec. 27 in West Hollywood after sheriff's deputies saw her car straddling two lanes of traffic and failing to signal for a turn.

A phone message left with Barton's publicist, Howard Bragman, was not immediately returned.

Barton is scheduled to be arraigned on Thursday in Beverly Hills Superior Court.

Barton

Clapton invited to play North Korea

LONDON (AP)—North Korean officials have invited rock guitarist Eric Clapton to play a concert in the communist state, a diplomat at the country's embassy in London said.

The diplomat confirmed reports in the British media that Clapton had been officially invited to Pyongyang—the first such invitation to a Western rock star to the isolated nation.

"Eric Clapton is a well-known musician and guitarist, famous throughout the world," said the official, who declined to give his name, Tuesday. "It will be a good opportunity for Western music to be understood better by Koreans."

Clapton's North Korean debut may not be imminent, however.

Spokeswoman Kristen Foster said the 62-year-old musician had not agreed to play any dates in the country.

"Eric Clapton receives numerous offers to play in countries around the world," she said. "There is no agreement whatsoever for him to play in North Korea, nor any planned shows there."

North Korean authorities have long shunned rock and pop music, although Kim Jong Chol, the Swiss-educated son of national leader Kim Jong Il, is reportedly a Clapton fan.

Recently North Korea has begun to build tentative cultural ties with the West. The New York Philharmonic played in Pyongyang on Tuesday, and North Korean State Symphony Orchestra is due to perform in London and the English city of Middlesbrough in September.

The Financial Times reported the invitation to Clapton was in return for the Korean orchestra's British tour.

Clapton is regarded as one of rock's greatest guitarists, with a string of hits since the 1960s including include "Layla," "Cocaine" and "Tears in Heaven."

Michael Jackson's ranch may be auctioned

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A court filing says Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch will be put up for sale at a public auction next month unless the pop star pays the more than $24 million he still owes on the property.

Financial Title Co. filed the notice of trustee's sale with Santa Barbara County Superior Court on Tuesday, setting the auction date for March 19.

A spokeswoman for Jackson did not immediately return a call for comment.

After long life together empty nesters drift apart

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I have been married for 35 years. The first 30 were pretty much devoted to raising children.

Now that we are both retired and empty nesters, I realize just how focused our lives have been on family issues. While I have developed many interests, "Fred," has none besides solitary activities. He isn't interested in most of the things that I enjoy, but offers no alternatives. Consequently, I've learned to make social plans that do not include him.

I do spend a good deal of time at home with him, but I am feeling increasingly detached. I would like to have more of a life with Fred, but must I give up the relationships and activities that have provided a needed balance in my life in order to revive our marriage?

—MRS. COUCH POTATO

DEAR MRS. POTATO: And what's to guarantee that if you give up your friendships and activities that your marriage will be "revived"? Marriage is about compromise. Before this situation goes any further, you and Fred should talk to a counselor about the state of your union.

People who are anti-social may be extremely narrow in their range of interests, or they could be depressed. I'm advising you to find out now into which category your husband falls before you sever your social contacts.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My 15-year-old daughter, "Amy," was recently dumped by text message, and I am extremely frustrated with how to address her tears and heartbreak. Text messaging and instant messaging seem to be the only ways that young people communicate these days. This young man took the coward's way out.

Amy and I have had several heated discussions about it, mostly ending with us agreeing to disagree. My perspective is, when two people are ready to end a relationship, they should face the other person and talk about the reasons why it isn't working. Hers is, "That's just the way we do things now." Any thoughts?

—KATHY IN SPIRIT LAKE, IOWA

DEAR KATHY: You are both right. Communication is a skill that people learn through practice. And I, too, am concerned that a generation of young people isn't learning to communicate face-to-face. It's almost as though there is a fear of intimacy, and the signals that people send through facial expression and gesture are being lost because of overdependence on technology.

Although "that's the way we do things now" may be your daughter's perspective, my question to her would be, "Now that you know how terrible being dumped that way feels, would you do it to somebody else?"

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: When someone sneezes multiple times, do I have to "bless them" after every sneeze, at the end of all sneezes or only after the first sneeze?

—BLESSED OUT IN MENOMONEE FALLS, WIS.

DEAR BLESSED OUT: It depends upon how superstitious you are. The custom of "blessing" a person who sneezes originated during the Middle Ages, when people believed that when someone sneezed their souls left their bodies for an instant. Saying, "God bless you" ensured that the soul would jump back in, rather than be "lost." If you're really superstitious, then you should utter the blessing every time someone sneezes.

However, today most people say it only once after the first sneeze.

■ ■ ■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

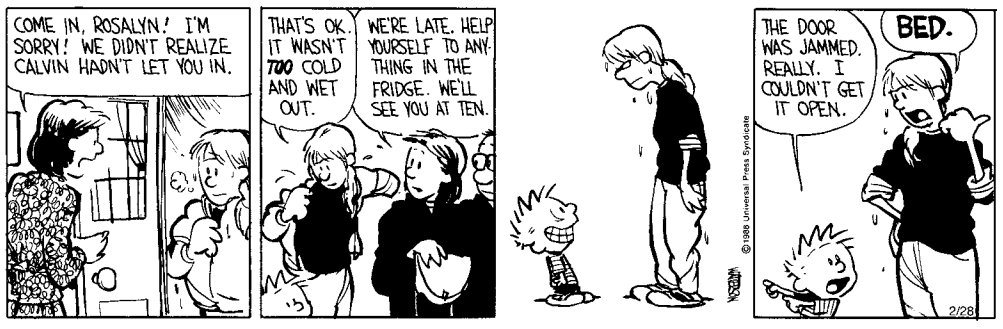
■ ■ ■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


COME IN, ROSALYN! I'M SORRY! WE DIDN'T REALIZE CALVIN HADN'T LET YOU IN.
THAT'S OK. IT WASN'T TOO COLD AND WET OUT.
WE'RE LATE. HELP YOURSELF TO ANYTHING IN THE FRIDGE. WE'LL SEE YOU AT TEN.
THE DOOR WAS JAMMED. REALLY. I COULDN'T GET IT OPEN.
BED.
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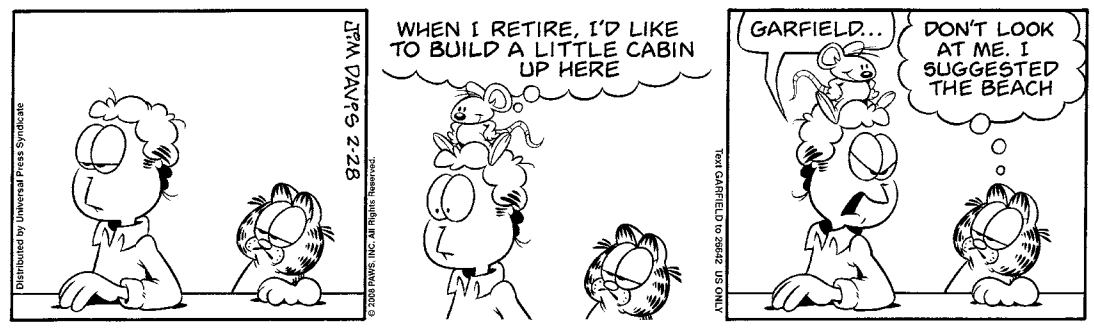
2/28

Garfield®

By Jim Davis


JIM DAVIS 2-28
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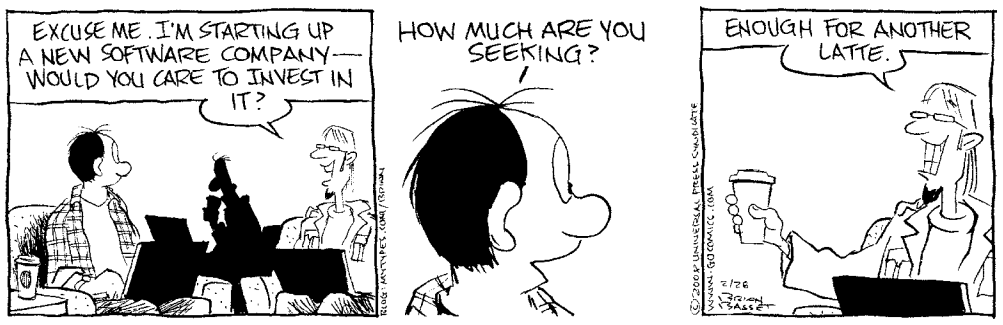
WHEN I RETIRE, I'D LIKE TO BUILD A LITTLE CABIN UP HERE
GARFIELD...
DON'T LOOK AT ME. I SUGGESTED THE BEACH
Text GARFIELD to 28682 for JIM DAVIS TEXT

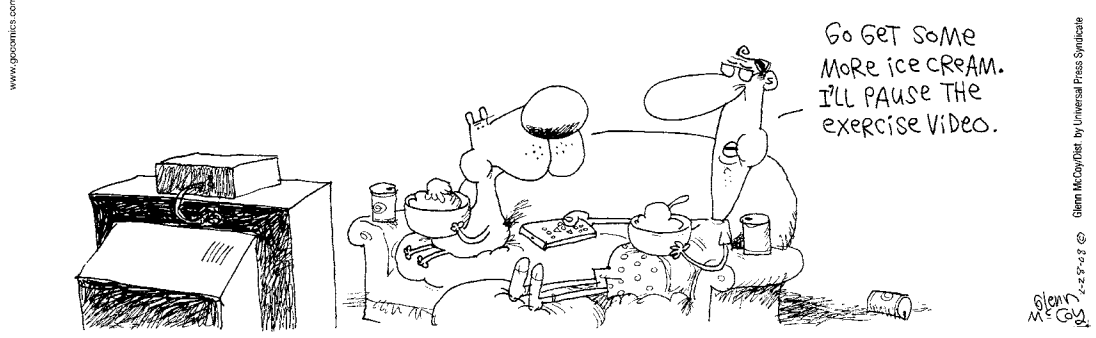
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


EXCUSE ME. I'M STARTING UP A NEW SOFTWARE COMPANY— WOULD YOU CARE TO INVEST IN IT?
HOW MUCH ARE YOU SEEKING?
ENOUGH FOR ANOTHER LATTE.
2/26

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

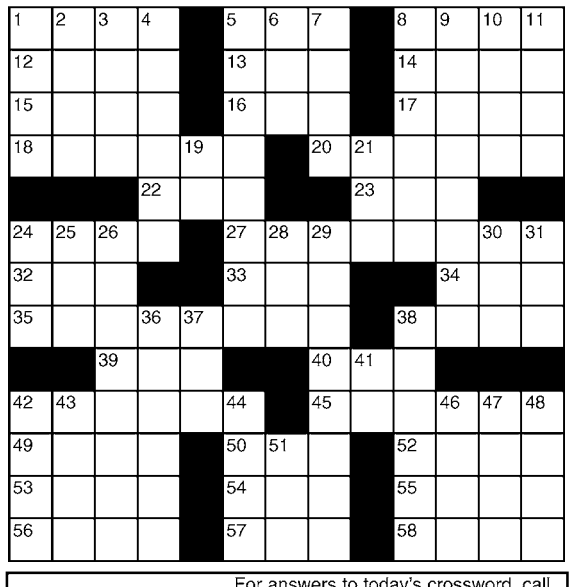
ACROSS
1 Prohibits
5 Undergo recession
8 First name of 8-Down
12 Stead
13 Lunch-time, on a sundial
14 Leaf angle
15 Smell
16 A billion years
17 Emeritus (Abbr.)
18 Synagogue singer
20 "Aha!"
22 Joan of —
23 Fish-fowl link
24 Mountain goat
27 Do a camel, maybe
32 Ultimate (Sl.)
33 Kenny G's instrument
34 Stannum
35 Opening night
38 Burpee bit
39 Bill's partner
40 Silent
42 Grads
45 Hitchcock classic
49 Location
50 Fa follower
52 Bellow
53 Unsigned (Abbr.)
54 Meadow
55 Cleopatra's water
56 Saucy
57 Screw up
58 33-Across range

DOWN
1 United nations
2 Verdi opera
3 Broadway flasher
4 Additional levy
5 Calisthenics, e.g.
6 Story of a lifetime?
7 Bob's longtime pal
8 "Mikrokosmos" composer
9 Denounce
10 Stone (Suff.)
11 "Things I Overheard While Talking to Myself" author
19 Neighbor of WA
21 Come- — (lures)
24 Mischievous little one
25 Saloon
26 Will VIP
28 Auto
29 Ideal model
30 Dead heat
31 Conclusion
36 Second
37 Charged bit
38 Fig variety
41 "People" rival
42 Without delay, on a memo
43 Occupation
44 Capri or Wight
46 Spiral
47 Stop
48 Black-and-white treat
51 "— the ramparts ..."

Solution time: 25 mins.

W	H	I	M	■	L	I	E	■	F	R	O	G
I	O	T	A	■	I	N	C	■	L	U	L	L
G	O	L	D	R	U	S	H	■	I	S	L	E
S	P	L	A	Y	■	■	O	R	P	H	A	N
■	■	■	M	E	S	S	■	I	S	M	■	■
S	A	M	E	■	C	A	L	F	■	O	P	T
I	D	O	■	J	U	L	I	E	■	R	A	N
P	A	R	■	I	M	A	N	■	J	E	S	T
■	■	■	E	G	G	■	D	O	N	E	■	■
P	R	O	U	S	T	■	■	O	W	N	E	D
H	I	V	E	■	O	V	E	R	E	A	S	Y
A	G	E	S	■	F	A	Y	■	L	I	T	E
T	A	R	T	■	U	S	E	■	S	L	E	D

Yesterday's answer 2-28



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Eric Lindros, 35; Robert Sean Leonard, 39; John Turturro, 51; Bernadette Peters, 60

Happy Birthday: Ready yourself for change. Be prepared to accept the inevitable and show your ability to adapt and you will prove you have what it takes to move up in the world. An open mind and strong will power will be required to advance. This can be a great year if you are willing to take a leap of faith. Your numbers are 9, 13, 18, 23, 31, 38

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): If you are playing by the rules, you have nothing to fear but, you can expect someone to try to make you look bad or to pressure you into something you don't want. Take control—don't get angry or overreact. Gauge your motives. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Don't let a stressful relationship hold you back. Trips will lead to opportunities to expand your interests and skills. A love connection may cause you some grief -ñ if so, you may want to allow yourself some space. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Use your imagination and the sky will be the limit as to what you can accomplish today. It's your ability to make what you do a little different than everyone else that will help you gain recognition. Spend time working on your own. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Work-related matters will be a little iffy today, especially if you become emotional or stubborn. Take things one at a time and refrain from imagining things are a lot worse than what they really are. Think positively. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): You can make financial gains if you play your cards right. A love interest is more interested in you than you realize. Tread carefully if you or he or she are already involved with someone else. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): An interesting conversation with someone you'd consider partnering with will give you greater insight into the possibilities that exist. A problem with someone you live with or that you are close to will leave you with additional responsibilities. ✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): You are in a high cycle when it comes to romance, adventure and travel. Book a trip or, better still, take off for the day and engage in interesting activities, pampering or a cultural experience. Stick to your budget. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Don't disagree when dealing with domestic situations. Less talk and more action will be what saves the day in the end. You will have some great ideas but you aren't likely to be able to sell them. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): As long as you don't expect things to run smoothly, you will be able to deal with just about anything. Bragging about what you can do will lead to getting stuck doing something you aren't equipped to do. Use your imagination and research. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Keep your feelings shielded from anyone who may be trying to find out what you are going to do. It's the element of surprise that will keep you in whatever game you play. A chance to pay back a debt or collect one will eliminate stress. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): You are finally in a position to push, reform or get what you want. Plan your actions and execute them without hesitation. Your Aquarius charm and vivid imagination will win the approval of the people you deal with professionally and personally. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Tread carefully when it comes to talks or negotiations. Becoming emotional will not help you get what you want. Prove your ability to do what's required of you. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You may be unpredictable to the onlooker but you know exactly what you are trying to accomplish. You are clever, intuitive and always proactive.

Eugenia's Web sites: **astroadvice.com** *for fun,* **eugenialast.com** *for confidential consultations*

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

5							1	
			7		2			9
					5	8		
	7			1		4	6	
			4		8			
	2	3		6			5	
		7	2					
1			3		6			
	4							7

Difficulty Level ★★★ 2/28

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

7	2	1	4	9	3	8	6	5
6	3	8	7	2	5	1	9	4
4	9	5	6	8	1	2	7	3
1	8	7	5	6	4	3	2	9
2	4	3	8	1	9	6	5	7
5	6	9	2	3	7	4	1	8
3	5	2	1	7	8	9	4	6
9	1	4	3	5	6	7	8	2
8	7	6	9	4	2	5	3	1

Difficulty Level ★★★ 2/27

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

CAMP DAVID Solution: 9 letters

Y	H	Y	K	S	A	F	E	T	Y	N	Y	T	P	R
A	C	C	O	R	D	S	E	L	A	R	E	D	E	F
G	R	A	S	S	A	N	S	V	O	R	N	C	A	E
Y	I	V	M	S	N	P	A	K	R	A	R	C	C	N
H	B	I	E	I	A	L	C	A	L	E	I	O	E	C
T	I	R	S	T	T	I	I	Y	A	L	U	S	F	E
L	C	P	H	P	H	N	R	T	I	N	T	L	U	T
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A	E	D	L	A	I	I	G	E	R	Y	A	B	T	L
V	S	O	L	N	K	T	W	T	C	(E)	K	A	S	C
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I	L	E	C	N	A	R	T	N	E	(S)	M	D	A	R

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Accords, Acres, Beauty, Bicycles, Birch, Cabins, Calm, Climate, Cool, County, Develop, Entrance, Facility, Federal, Fence, Golf, Grass, Guests, Haven, Healthy, Hickory, Intimacy, Lodges, Maple, Maryland, Naval, Oaks, Park, Paths, Peaceful, Privacy, Protected, Recreational, Rocky, Safety, Site, Solitude, Still, Tennis, Terrain, Trees, Unite, Unwind

Yesterday's Answer: Matchmaking

WONDERWORD offers the **"Book of Celebrities,"** for $5.95 each (US funds only) payable to Universal Press Syndicate plus $3 postage for the first book order, $1 p&h for each additional book. Send to WONDERWORD, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free, 1-800-255-8734, ext. 6688. Order online at upuzzles.com.

CLASSIFIED ADS

CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	$25
• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

All job vacancy announcements will be published for two issues in each of two successive weeks.

1st position	**$13.00**
2nd position	**$5.00**
Succeeding positions	**$2.00**

These rates apply to all job vacancy announcements in Saipan that include corresponding benefits and which positions are all under the same company name and dba.

Newspaper clippings are also available for $.25 per copy.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Job Vacancy Announcements

Monday Through Friday Issues: All ads placed before 12 noon will come out the next publication date.

Saturday And Sunday Issues:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

Job Vacancy Announcements

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

FOR RENT - RESIDENTIAL

Apartment room for rent: Fully furnished 1 brm, T/B, 24-hr water $210/month, near Conwood | Tel. 287-1372, 235-6748

Apartment Room for Rent
2 bed room $230.00, Koblerville.
Contact: 288-0728.

EMPLOYMENT

Tony Roma's/Capricciosa ACCOUNTANT
BS Acctg, CPA/foreign equiv pref. Min 2 yrs exp.
MS Excel/Word/Outlook. Great comm skills.
Valid driver's license. Police clearance required.
Email resume to mjg@wdiusa.com. Fax 322-7517
NO PHONE CALLS PLEASE.

USSP Club Needs
(1) Bartender, (2) Waitresses
More Info: Call Rose/233-1984

WHATZIT Solution: Unfinished business

Commercial Space & Room for Rent
- 4000 sq.ft. commercial space, good for warehouse (previously rented to Mingli Wholesale), auto-shop, day-care, office, etc. Located in Chalan Laulau between Middle Rd. & Beach Rd. Back of Triple J Auto.
- Room from $80-$140/mo. behind Triple J Auto on Beach Rd. near to XO Market & H-Mart.

Call Ivan @ 235-0479, 285-9966, 9:00am - 6:00pm

Need Properties.
We are loooking for properties, house, building, apartment, etc. Interested owners please see Rayanne @ Yuta Office, Afetna Bldg., San Antonio beside Bank of Guam. Please come personally. No phone calls.

PTI *Your connection to the world*

PTI is looking for qualified Universal Service Representatives. The successful candidates will be highly client focused and have one to two years experience in customer service / sales.

Applicant must have:

- A high school diploma or equivalent
- Strong English verbal and written skills
- Strong listening skills and attention to detail
- Friendly and motivated personality
- The ability to handle customer inquires and request for services, billing and collection.
- The ability to make recommendations to satisfy a customer's product and services needs.
- U.S. Citizenship

Hired individuals will receive very competitive wages and will be eligible for health care benefits.

Interested candidates must complete a PTI application by Friday, February 29, 2007 and submit it to

PTI – Susupe Office
Attn: Human Resources
Post Office Box 500306 CK
Saipan MP 96950
Tel : 670-234-6600
Fax: 670-235-9559

PTI is an Equal Opportunity Employer
Women, Minorities and Veterans are encouraged to apply.

WHATZIT?™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

BUSINES

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Find today's solution in this section

FOR SALE - COMMERCIAL

Bud's Bar For Sell. $20,000 or best offer. You must see to appreciate. #898-4866/233-1113

BUSINESS SERVICES

BEAT THE HIGH COST OF GAS!
Visit: http://paquino.ffivideo.com
Business Opportunity-Be A Distributor

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 COOK (TH 4723)
Salary:$3.55-$4.45/hour. Benefits: housing company provided at a charge $30.00/month; workers compensation company provided; medical expenses company provided. Contact: Nippon General Trading Corp. @233-8223.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 WAITRESS/WAITER (TH 4724)
Salary:$3.55-$3.85/hour. Benefits: housing company provided at a charge $30.00/month; workers compensation company provided; medical expenses company provided. Contact: Nippon General Trading Corp. @233-8223.

1 SCUBA DIVING INSTRUCTOR (TH 4725)
Salary:$800.00/monthly. Benefit: medical expenses employer provided; workers compensation employer provided. Contact: Sealovers Saipan Inc. @233-5219.

1 BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (TH 4726)
Salary:$3.05-$3.55/hour. Benefit: workers compensation company provided; medical expenses company provided. Contact: J.T.M. Corporation @233-5436.

1 INTERPRETER (TH 4727)
Salary:$3.55-$6.00/hour. Benefit: housing $150.00 allowance; workers compensation; medical insurance. Contact: Anthony R. Stearns, MD dba Marianas Medical Center @234-3926.

1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (TH 4748)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: housing none/self provided; food none/self provided; workers compensation and medical provided. Contact: Sablan Topline Company, LLC @235-5206.

1 ACCOUNTANT (TH 4749)
Salary:$4.50/hour. Benefit: free medical expenses; free workers compensation insurance. Contact: Multi Business Corp. dba Accounting Service, Video Haus, VH Mini Mart, C3 Wholesale Seafood @233-5397.

3 CUTTER (TH 4750)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: housing self; food self; company provided workers comp.; medical expenses. Contact: Yong Jih Corp. @288-3889.

9 HAND SEWER (TH 4751)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: housing self; food self; company provided workers comp.; medical expenses. Contact: Yong Jih Corp. @288-3889.

1 COOK HELPER (TH 4752)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: medical; workers compensation provided. Contact: Bobbie's Amusement Co. Inc. dba Bobbie's Café @235-2624.

1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (TH 4753)
Salary:$3.55-$4.25/hour. Benefit: housing self arranged; food self arranged; free medical expense; workers compensation. Contact: United International Corporation @235-6888/7888.

3 HAND PACKER (TH 4754)
Salary:$3.55-$4.25/hour. Benefit: housing self arranged; food self arranged; free medical expense; workers compensation. Contact: United International Corporation @235-6888/7888.

1 WAREHOUSE WORKER (TH 4755)
Salary:$3.55-$4.25/hour. Benefit: housing self arranged; food self arranged; free medical expense; workers compensation. Contact: United International Corporation @235-6888/7888.

1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (TH 4756)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: housing not provided; food not provided; medical; workers compensation provided. Contact: Pacific Saipan, LLC. Dba Sign Arts @483-1000.

1 BUILDING MAINTENANCE (TH 4757)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: housing employee provided; food employee provided; the workers compensation insurance & medical expenses are employer provided. Contact: Hiron Mollah dba Mollah Enterprises @234-3015/285-5547.

1 RESERVATIONS AGENT (TH 4758)
Salary:$6.00/hour. Benefit: housing self arranged; food self arranged; medical; workers compensation. Contact: Sandcastle Saipan, LLC @233-7263.

1 COMPUTER PROGRAMMER (TH 4759)
Salary:$3.55-$4.00/hour. Benefit: housing self arranged; food self arranged; medical; workers compensation. Contact: Danilo T. Aguilar dba Law Office of Danilo T. Aguilar @234-8801/235-5466.

1 HOUSE WORKER (TH 4760)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: housing self arranged; food self arranged; medical. Contact: Danilo T. Aguilar dba Law Office of Danilo T. Aguilar @234-8801/235-5466.

1 WAITER/SERVER/WAITRESS (TH 4761)
Salary:$4.10/hour. Benefit: housing self arranged; food 2 duty meals; medical insurance; vacation leave; workers compensation. Contact: WDI Saipan, Inc. dba Tony Roma's/Capricciosa @322-7516.

WANTED: Accountant

Qualifications
- Minimum 2 years manufacturing accounting experience
- Familiarity with Peachtree Premium accounting software and Point of Sale system
- Demonstrated understanding of integrated perpetual inventory accounting, invoicing, accounts receivables, and accounts payable
- Extensive knowledge of accounting principles, practices and the analysis and reporting of financial data
- Must be a team player in a fast-paced work environment

Submit cover letter, resume and any related materials in Adobe Acrobat or MS Word format via email to:
670employment@gmail.com.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 KITCHEN SUPERVISOR
(TH 4762)
Salary:$4.70/hour. Benefit: housing self arranged; food 2 duty meals; medical insurance; vacation leave; workers compensation. Contact: WDI Saipan, Inc. dba Tony Roma's/ Capricciosa @322-7516.

1 RESTAURANT MANAGER
(GENERAL) (TH 4763)
Salary:$1,770.83/BI-WEEKLY. Benefit: housing self arranged; food 2 duty meals; medical insurance; vacation leave; workers compensation. Contact: WDI Saipan, Inc. dba Tony Roma's/Capricciosa @322-7516.

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1 WAITRESS/WAITER
(TH 4764)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: medical insurance; workers comp. Contact: American K&W Corp. @233-9468.

1 WAITRESS/WAITER
(TH 4765)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefit: medical insurance; workers comp. Contact: American K&W Corp. @233-9468.

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1 ASSISTANT RESTAURANT MANAGER (TH 4766)
Salary:$461.54/bi-weekly. Benefit: housing free if no A/C; medical insurance; vacation leave; workers compensation. Contact: Triple J Saipan, Inc. dba Truong's Restaurant @234-1795.

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1 PASSENGER SERVICE AGENT (TTh 0001)
Salary:$3.55-$4.05/HOUR. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation employers provided. Contact: Pacific Oriental Inc. @ 288-0360 TO 0362.

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1 MAINTENANCE REPAIRER
(ThS 0001)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Mugen Corporation @ 323-9238.

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1 CASHIER (ThS 0002)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: McMillan Corporation/James McMillan dba J & N Mini Mart @ 322-4616.

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1 ACCOUNTANT (ThS 0003)
Salary:$800.00-$1,000.00/month. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; vacation & sick leaves, medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Western Sales Trading Company @ 322-6031.

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1 BEAUTICIAN (ThS 0004)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Hen Qi Li Corp. @ 235-6891.

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1 MASON (ThS 0005)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Universal Development Inc. @ 322-5881.

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1 DRESSMAKER (ThS 0006)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Hong Fu, Inc. @ 233-6160 / 287-5998.

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2 TELEPHONE CABLE SPLICER
(TTH 0002)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medicare & workers compensation. Contact: Saipan World Corp. dba ITS @235-6511.

1 COMMUNICATION ENGINEER
(TTH 0003)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Saipan World Corp. dba ITS @235-6511.

1 GENERAL MANAGER
(TTH 0004)
Salary:$4.00/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Saipan World Corp. dba ITS @235-6511.

1 ACCOUNTANT (TTH 0005)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medicare & workers compensation. Contact: Saipan World Corp. dba ITS @235-6511.

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1 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
(TTH 0006)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical care. Contact: Global Ground Corp. @288-1211.

1 ACCOUNTANT (TTH 0007)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Global Ground Corp. @288-1211.

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1 MANAGER (TTH 0008)
Salary:$1,800.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Koma Corp. @483-8810.

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1 GENERAL MANAGER
(TTH 0009)
Salary:$1,700.00/monthly. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Yihua Corp. @288-1211.

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1 AIR-CON MECHANIC
(TTH 0010)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing; $100.00/food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Jangahn Investment Corp. dba Prince Hotel @322-9000.

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1 SPORTS INSTRUCTOR
(TTH 0011)
Salary:$3.55-$10.00/hour. Benefits: Free housing except utility; medical bill and workers compensation is company provided. Contact: Big Boy Marine Sports, Inc. dba Big Boy'z II Marine @234-3358.

1 ACCOUNTANT (TTH 0012)
Salary:$3.55-$8.00/hour. Benefits: Free housing except utility; medical bill and workers compensation is company provided. Contact: Big Boy Marine Sports, Inc. dba Big Boy'z II Marine @234-3358.

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1 HEAVY EQUIP. OPERATOR
(TTH 0013)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Free housing; transportation to from jobsite; medical insurance & workmen's compensation. Contact: Raymond P. Ceron dba Ceron Heavy Equipment & Parts @234-8128.

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1 LIVE-IN HOUSEWORKER
(TTH 0014)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: $100.00/housing monthly deduction; $100.00/food monthly deduction & CNMI taxes. Contact: Jeannette Mary T. Pangelinan @483-3326.

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1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER
(TTH 0015)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Work compensation & medical insurance. Contact: Cargo Express (Saipan), Inc. @234-6616/7/8.

1 MECHANIC (GAS & DIESEL)
(TTH 0016)
Salary:$3.55-$3.75/hour. Benefits: Work compensation & medical insurance. Contact: Cargo Express (Saipan), Inc. @234-6616/7/8.

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1 ACCOUNTANT (TTH 0017)
Salary:$600.00-$1,000.00/monthly. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Marianas Professional Services, Inc. dba LBT Appraisal @234-7325.

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1 ARCADE ATTENDANT
(TTH 0018)
Salary:$3.55-$4.50/hour. Benefits: Medical reimbursable & workers compensation insurance. Contact: Jimin Enterprises, Inc. dba Royal Casino/Grand Poker @235-3455/233-3378.

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1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER
(TTH 0019)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: LFP Corporation dba Marg's Kitchen @234-3706.

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2 COOK (THS 0007)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workman compensation provided. Contact: Da Kine, Inc. dba Hawaii Bar & Grill @285-3740.

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1 BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (THS 0008)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Islas Marianas, Inc. dba Ace Poker @233-2211.

1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (THS 0009)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Islas Marianas, Inc. dba Ace Poker @233-2211.

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1 OPERATION MANAGER (THS 0010)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Hanmi, Inc. dba Hanmi Hardware @233-2211.

1 ELECTRICIAN (THS 0011)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Hanmi, Inc. dba Hanmi Hardware @233-2211.

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1 GENERAL MANAGER (THS 0012)
Salary:$12.50/hour. Benefits: Employer provide housing; employee provide food; employer provides medical & workers compensation insurance. Contact: Calvo's Insurance Underwriters (CNMI) Inc. @234-5691/4/8.

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1 ELECTRONIC TECHNICIAN (THS 0013)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Oriental Corporation dba Electronics World @233-1212.

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2 MASON (THS 0014)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; own food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Lolita N. Palacios dba J&L House Rental @234-1081.

1 CARPENTER (THS 0015)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; own food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Lolita N. Palacios dba J&L House Rental @234-1081.

1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (THS 0016)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; own food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Lolita N. Palacios dba J&L House Rental @234-1081.

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1 BIOMEDICAL (SERVICE ENGINEER) TECHNICIAN (THS 0017)
Salary:$5.00-$15.00/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; workers compensation as required by law & medical coverage as required by law. Contact: Pacific Biomedical Services, Inc. dba PBSI @288-0566.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP08-CRM-047

SUBMISSION: APRIL 03, 2008 TIME: 4:00 P.M.

"COMPILATION OF A CNMI CORAL REEF CURRICULUM FOR THE COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OFFICE"

COPIES OF THE SCOPE OF WORK MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY IN LOWERBASE DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

PREFERENCE IS AVAILABLE TO US CITIZENS OR PERMANENT RESIDENTS AS PER PUBLIC LAW 15-95 AND AS FURTHER AMENDED BY PUBLIC LAW 15-118 AND MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE PROPOSAL IF PREFERENCED IS CLAIMED.

ALL INQUIRIES REGARDING THIS RFP SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO REINA CAMACHO, CORAL REEF EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR, AT FAX 664-8540, OR E-MAIL TO reinacamacho@deqgov.mp.

/s/ JOHN B. JOYNER, Ph.D
DIRECTOR, CRMO

/s/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
State Board of Education

Public School System
P. O. Box 501370, Saipan, MP 96950

Invitation For Bid
IFB 08-025

The Public School System is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the purchase, delivery, installation, and assembly of **Classroom Furniture and Audio Equipment for Saipan Southern High School, Saipan**. Detailed information on the Scope of Work is available at the PSS Procurement & Supply Office located on the 3rd floor of the NMI Retirement Fund Building, Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950.

All bids shall be in a sealed envelope face marked "IFB 08-025" containing one (1) original and three (3) copies and submitted to the PSS Procurement and Supply Office no later than **March 11, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.** Responsibility Determination documents shall be placed in a separate envelope marked "IFB 08-025, CONFIDENTIAL - Responsibility Determination" (one (1)-original and one (1)-copy). Any bid after the aforementioned date and time will not be accepted under any circumstance.

Technical questions shall be in writing and addressed to Mr. Carl de la Cruz, Acting Procurement & Supply Officer, via the following fax number: (670) 664-3791. Alternatively, technical questions may be e-mailed to the following address: **delacruzc@pss.cnmi.mp**. Questions shall be submitted at least three (3) business days prior to the deadline to submit bids.

General inquiries may be directed to the PSS Procurement and Supply Office at telephone numbers 237-3062 or 3035.

Bidders are required to submit with their bid, a copy of their valid CNMI Business License.

The Public School System reserves the right to award single or multiple awards or to reject any or all bids, in whole or in part, if to do so is in the best interest of the Public School System.

All bids shall become the property of the Public School System.

/S/ Dr. David M. Borja, D.B.A.
Commissioner of Education

/S/ Carl F. de la Cruz, M.B.A.
Acting P&S Officer

Yao out for season with left foot injury

HOUSTON (AP)—All-Star center Yao Ming is out for the season with a stress fracture in his left foot, a stunning blow to the surging Houston Rockets. General manager Daryl Morey made the announcement Tuesday, hours before the Rockets put their 12-game winning streak on the line against the Washington Wizards.

Yao was having a terrific season, averaging 22 points and 10.8 rebounds per game.

"It is not an injury we feel he can play with," Rockets team doctor Tom Clanton said. "I've made the recommendation that it be treated surgically and we are working with him to get other opinions just to be certain that that is indeed what should be done."

If Yao chooses surgery, Clanton said, it would involve placing screws across the bone to hold it together. The second option would be to treat it with a cast and crutches. Both options involve a healing time of about four months.

Clanton would not say when Yao could play again, but said he doesn't expect the center to miss the Beijing Olympics in August.

That possibility is weighing heavily on him though.

"If I cannot play in the Olympics for my country this time, it will be the biggest loss in my career to right now," he said.

He doesn't even want to think about how his absence in the game would affect his fans in China.

"I don't want to try, actually and I don't want to know either," he said.

Coach Rick Adelman and Morey told the team before Tuesday's shootaround. Yao said it was a difficult day for him from the moment he walked into the building.

"When coach tells everybody I am out for the season, everybody is like quiet," he said. "That kind of quietness makes me feel kind of scared, it was quiet like nobody was there and you just feel alone."

Morey said he doesn't believe the injury compromises Houston's playoff hopes. The Rockets were 36-20 entering Tuesday's game.

"We've been playing exceptional ball and Yao's been a huge part of that," Morey said. "We feel very confident about our playoff push. We've managed to step up and play well without Yao in the past and coaches and players feel confident that we're going to continue to play well and make the playoffs this year."

AP

Houston Rockets center Yao Ming, center, of China, looks on as teammate Luis Scola, right, of Argentina is introduced before the Rockets game against the Washington Wizards in an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008, in Houston.

Morey acknowledged that it was difficult news to receive when the team has been playing so well.

"It's a pretty big swing from a high to a low, with how we were playing," Morey said. "We feel like our supporting cast is superior to when we played without Yao in the past. We remain ready for the challenge ahead."

Clanton said there was no specific event that led to the injury, but rather an "accumulation of stresses on the bone. Yao first experienced soreness and pain in his ankle before the All-Star game and tests were done Monday when the situation didn't improve.

This is Yao's fourth major injury in the last two years. He missed 32 games last season with a fracture in his right leg and 21 games in late 2006 with a toe infection that required surgery. He missed four games in April 2006 after breaking his foot.

Houston went 20-12 when Yao was injured last season.

The Rockets, who remain in seventh place in the tough Western Conference despite their winning streak, will now have to rely heavily on 41-year-old Dikembe Mutombo. The 17-year veteran has been averaging just eight minutes per game.

"I really feel bad for Yao," Adelman said. "It's just such a shocker. Yesterday morning he was OK and then four hours later, he wasn't. It's tough on everybody, but we've got to move on."

Yao said he took Tracy McGrady aside after speaking to the team and told him the success of the team is up to him now.

"We're in a good situation right now," he said he told McGrady. "Right now is your time."

On Tuesday, the Rockets signed Bobby Jones to a 10-day contract and released Adam Haluska.

While it took more than two weeks to discover Yao's injury, Clanton said it sometimes takes months to diagnose.

"This is something that can be treated," he said. "We are catching this at a very early stage."

Heat snaps 11-game losing streak by beating Kings

MIAMI (AP)—Miami broke an 11-game NBA losing streak by beating the Sacramento Kings 107-86 on Tuesday.

Shawn Marion scored 24 points on 10-of-14 shooting and Udonis Haslem added 17 for the Heat, who won for just the second time in their past 28 games—and did so in style, with their largest margin of the season.

Miami held Sacramento to 10 percent shooting (2-for-20) in the third quarter, a Heat franchise record. The Heat held a 31-11 edge in that period, the first time in more than a year Miami outscored a foe by at least 20 points in a quarter.

Miami became the final NBA team this season to reach a meager 10 wins.

Lakers 96, Trail Blazers 83

In Los Angeles, the home team won its ninth straight by downing Portland.

Kobe Bryant scored 11 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter, and the Lakers held the Trail Blazers to 36 percent field goal shooting.

The win kept Los Angeles a game clear atop the Pacific Division and Western Conference.

The Blazers have lost eight of their past nine to drift 5-1/2 game off the playoff spots.

Warriors 105, SuperSonics 99°Ë

In Oakland, California, Monta Ellis scored 30 points to lead Golden State over Seattle.

Austin Croshere added 14 in the decisive third quarter without missing a shot for the Warriors.

Magic 102, Nets 92

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Orlando won its third straight with victory over New Jersey.

Hedo Turkoglu scored 17 his 25 points in the fourth quarter as Orlando ran its streak of 100-point games to nine.

AP

Houston Rockets center Yao Ming, center, of China, looks on as teammate Luis Scola, right, of Argentina is introduced before the Rockets game against the Washington Wizards in an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008, in Houston.

The Magic extended its lead atop the Southeast Division to 9 games.

Suns 127, Grizzlies 113

In Memphis, Tennessee, Steve Nash had 25 points and 13 assists to spearhead Phoenix's win over Memphis.

Shaquille O'Neal added 13 points to go along with 11 rebounds for the Sun despite sitting out the fourth quarter. It was O'Neal's first double-double since joining Phoenix.

Rockets 94, Wizards 69

In Houston, the loss of Yao Ming for the rest of the season did not prevent Houston notching a 13th straight win by beating Washington.

Luther Head had 18 points for the Rockets, who must adjust to life without Yao, who will miss the remainder of the campaign due to a stress fracture in the foot.

Houson is on its longest winning streak since its championship season of 1993-94, and is now just two games off the top of the Southwest Division.

The Wizards dismal first half saw a franchise-low 23 points, and they couldn't dig themselves out of a 28-point halftime deficit. Their 69 points were a season-low and they made just 26 of 83 shots.

Bucks 105, Cavaliers 102

In Milwaukee, Michael Redd hit a winning 3-pointer as the buzzer sounded to give Milwaukee victory over Cleveland.

Cleveland's LeBron James had just hit a tying layup with 5.9 seconds left when Redd launched a 27-foot shot from the left side that sailed through the basket with 0.1 seconds remaining on the clock. After a replay review, officials ruled the shot good and the game over.

Timberwolves 111, Jazz 100

In Minneapolis, Al Jefferson and Rashad McCants scored 22 points each to give Minnesota a win over Utah.

Randy Foye added a season-high 20 for Minnesota, which forced 24 turnovers and held the Jazz to 6-for-21 shooting in the final quarter to get its first win against a Northwest Division team.

Oscar De La Hoya sets retirement plan

BOXING

CARSON, Calif. (AP)—Oscar De La Hoya plans to fight three times this year, then retire. "I'm at that stage of my career now where I can't take it further," the 35-year-old De La Hoya said Tuesday. "I can't go on for the next two years, three years. It's just time to hang up the gloves.

"This is the year."

De La Hoya was speaking with a small group of reporters after a news conference to discuss his May 3 bout against Steve Forbes, a runner-up on television's "Tournament of Contenders."

A former champion in five weight classes and one of boxing's most recognizable fighters, De La Hoya wants to meet Floyd Mayweather Jr. in a September rematch of their bout last May. Mayweather won by split decision.

A third fight, if all goes according to De La Hoya's plan, would be determined afterward. He has a 38-5 record, with 30 knockouts, but has lost three of his last five.

"I've been thinking about this for the longest time now, and now is the perfect year," he said. "The fact that my body can still do it, the fact that my mind wants to do it.

"This is the perfect moment for me to hang up the gloves and be one a few, or maybe be the only one, to do it right. I don't want to be categorized as an athlete who retired too early, then had to come back and fight one more time.

"I really want to go out with a big bang."

De La Hoya got the nickname "Golden Boy" when he won the gold medal at the 1992 Olympics. He went on to become the biggest non-heavyweight draw of his generation.

Forbes will bring a 33-5 record, with nine knockouts, into their bout at the Home Depot Center.

De La Hoya's three-bout outline for the year first depends, of course, on getting past Forbes. A stocky 31-year-old, Forbes said he has never been knocked down as an amateur or pro.

De La Hoya termed it his most important fight, with some reason. If he loses, his "farewell tour" will be spoiled, and he almost certainly will not get to fight Mayweather again.

De La Hoya said he is returning to his "roots," going back to his former training camp in the mountain resort of Big Bear, Calif., and training like he did when he began his career.

He insists he won't look past Forbes.

"I'm not falling for that trap of this being a tuneup fight," he said. "This is the fight of my life. He was a (TV) contender, and I'm not a champion, I'm a contender."

Forbes thought someone was playing a joke on him when he first got a call about a match with De La Hoya, then finally realized he really was going to be in what is easily his biggest bout.

"I'd been waiting for that my whole life," Forbes said. "Oscar's the face of boxing. I've never had a chance to prove myself until now.

"It's like a `Rocky' movie."

Vandy knocks off top-ranked Tennessee

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—The Tennessee Volunteers found out being No. 1 can be tougher than beating No. 1. Shan Foster scored 32 points and No. 18 Vanderbilt knocked off Tennessee 72-69 on Tuesday night—a day after the Vols moved into the top spot in the rankings for the first time in school history.

The Vols (25-3, 11-2 Southeastern Conference) beat then-No. 1 Memphis on Saturday night 66-62 on the western edge of Tennessee for their ninth straight victory to earn that spot themselves, then had to travel back to the middle part of the state to defend their top ranking for the first time.

Tennessee coach Bruce Pearl said his Vols were fine, not exhausted by two road games against instate rivals in about 72 hours.

"I thought we put ourselves in a position in the second half on the road to be able to gut one out again, and they got a period there in the second half defensively where we just fouled them and sent them to the foul line a boatload of times. I thought that was a real difference," Pearl said.

Vanderbilt (24-4, 9-4) has hosted the No. 1 team nine times in its 56 years at Memorial Gym, and the Commodores improved to 6-3 overall in those games with victories in the past four, including then-No. 1 Florida last year. The Commodores also now have won all 18 home games this season and 31 of their last 32.

"It's special," Vanderbilt coach Kevin Stallings said. "We needed a win. It was a home game. It's a big game for them. You want to win any game, but you certainly want to win big games. This was a big game."

Jermaine Beal added 17 points and Alex Gordon 11 as Vanderbilt won its seventh straight. The Dores moved into a tie with Kentucky for second in the SEC East, a mere game behind the Vols with three games to play.

Chris Lofton led Tennessee with 25 points. Tyler Smith, playing with the flu, had 11 points and a career-high 17 rebounds.

"They came out with the passion and played with more intensity than us. They wanted it more than us tonight, and it showed. They got the win and they deserved it," Lofton said.

AP

Tennessee head coach Bruce Pearl and a Vanderbilt fan sitting behind him have different reactions to a play in the first half of a college basketball game in Nashville, Tenn., Tuesday, Feb. 26, 2008.

The Commodores celebrated by high-fiving classmates as they walked and skipped between the student section and the campus officers keeping them off the court.

These rivals separated by less than 200 miles hadn't played in Nashville with both ranked since 1968. Vandy won that game also.

This time, the Commodores had a sellout crowd making it even louder than what the Vols faced from a bigger group in Memphis' FedExForum. In Memorial, sound just rolls off the cinder block walls and back onto the floor, and one sign summed up the Vols' fate: "Enjoy Second Place Next Week."

The combination of the travel and quick turnaround left the Vols exhausted, and it showed in the first half as they hit only eight of 34 shots, too often shooting away from beyond the 3-point line where they hit only 5-of-17. They finished 20-of-61.

Wayne Chism, who had 18 points and 18 rebounds when Tennessee beat Vandy in Knoxville 80-60 last month, had four points and four rebounds.

"I thought we got punked in Knoxville," Foster said. "We wanted to show we were a different team."

Vanderbilt led 31-28 at the break after nearly blowing a 14-point lead in the opening half. The teams swapped the lead four times with three ties before Alan Metcalfe's 3-pointer broke a 43-all tie with 14:20 left, and Vandy never trailed again.

Tennessee stayed close enough to keep sending Vandy to the free throw line and pulled within 72-69 on Chism's dunk with 7.5 seconds.

But Ross Neltner got the ball past the Vols' pressing defense, Foster threw it upcourt to Keegan Bell. The Vols fouled him with 1.8 seconds left, and he missed both attempts. But a late throw at the basket went deep into the seats after the buzzer.

Vanderbilt nearly ran Tennessee out of the gym in the opening minutes by scoring 10 of the first 13 points and jumping out 23-9 on A.J. Ogilvy's dunk with 10:36 left in the first half. Then they went cold, finishing by hitting only two of their final 12 shots. They went nearly seven minutes between field goals before Foster hit his fourth 3 with 3:57 to go.

Tennessee answered with a 14-3 spurt, and Lofton missed a chance to tie it going into the half with an off-target 3 over two defenders just before the buzzer.

Pats RB Faulk allegedly busted with pot

LAFAYETTE, La. (AP)—New England Patriots running back Kevin Faulk was issued a misdemeanor summons last Friday for possession of marijuana. Capt. John Babin of the Lafayette Metro Narcotics Task Force confirmed the summons on Tuesday.

Faulk, a Louisiana native and former LSU star, was on his way to a suite in the Lafayette Cajundome to watch a performance by rapper Lil Wayne, when a routine search by a sheriff's deputy turned up four marijuana cigarettes, Babin said.

Everyone heading to the suites was searched, Babin said.

Faulk was not arrested or required to post bond.

"He was cited for simple possession, which is a misdemeanor," Babin said. "It's based on an amount possessed for personal use."

Faulk will be sent a letter notifying him of the court date when it is set.

"There was no trouble, Kevin was very cooperative," Babin said.

"We are aware of the report, but I don't have any additional comment at this time," Patriots spokesman Stacey James said.

Faulk, a captain last season for the first time in his nine years with the Patriots, had 47 catches for 383 yards and one touchdown, the winner in a come-from-behind 24-20 victory over Indianapolis on Nov. 4. He's the team's all-time leader in receptions by a running back with 323.

Clemens decision may come by end of week

WASHINGTON (AP)—Roger Clemens should know by the end of the week if Congress will ask the Justice Department to investigate whether the star pitcher or his accuser made false statements under oath. Clemens' lawyer says they knew long ago that is where things probably were headed.

The majority and minority sides of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee met Tuesday to discuss how to proceed on the Clemens matter.

"I can't say anything about discussions today," Phil Schiliro, chief of staff for committee chairman Henry Waxman, D-Calif., wrote in an e-mail to The Associated Press. "Our goal is a decision this week."

Waxman and ranking Republican Tom Davis of Virginia spoke with each other during a committee hearing about missing White House e-mails. When that hearing ended, Davis headed for the majority side's offices, rather than the minority side, as is customary.

Keith Ausbrook, Republican general counsel for the committee, wrote: "We will be consulting with the Democrats on what to do next. I cannot comment on any specific meeting or step."

At issue is whether Congress might have been lied to by Clemens or his former personal trainer, Brian McNamee.

McNamee says he injected the seven-time Cy Young Award winner with steroids and human growth hormone at least 16 times between 1998 and 2001. Clemens denies ever taking performance-enhancing drugs. Both men stuck to their stories under oath at depositions with committee lawyers and then at a Feb. 13 hearing, where the questioning by representatives ran mostly along party lines.

Congress got involved after hearing Clemens vigorously and repeatedly deny McNamee's allegations after they appeared in former Senate majority leader George Mitchell's report on drug use in baseball.

Congress may decide to ask the Justice Department to investigate one man, both—or neither. And then the Justice Department can opt to open an inquiry—or drop the matter altogether.

"I haven't heard anything, one way or the other. We're not waiting with bated breath," said Clemens' lead attorney, Rusty Hardin. "We always assumed that there would be the very real possibility of a referral if Roger testified differently than the Mitchell Report. We will be neither surprised if they do nor surprised if they don't."

Clemens, meanwhile, is getting set to do what he does best: throw baseballs. He showed up at the Houston Astros' spring training site in Kissimmee, Fla., on Tuesday, and refused to answer questions about what is happening in Washington.

"Everything's been said that needs to be said on that," Clemens said. "We're moving forward. It's baseball time."

He will pitch batting practice to minor leaguers Wednesday through Friday.

While one House committee is still trying to decide what to do about Clemens and McNamee, another is set to haul officials from Major League Baseball, the NFL, NBA, NHL, the NCAA and the Olympics up to Capitol Hill on Wednesday to discuss drugs in sports.

Commissioners Bud Selig, Roger Goodell, David Stern and Gary Bettman, along with their leagues' union heads, are among the witnesses slated to testify before the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection. U.S. Olympic Committee CEO Jim Scherr, U.S. Anti-Doping Agency CEO Travis Tygart, NCAA president Myles Brand and National Thoroughbred Racing Association CEO Alexander Waldrop are also on the witness list.

Bettman sought to distance his league from others.

"My only concern is that we shouldn't all be painted with the same broad brush. Every sport is different. What goes on in one sport does not go on in every sport," Bettman said. "This hasn't been an issue for us for a variety of reasons as it has been for others."

The subcommittee chairman, Illinois Democrat Bobby Rush, plans to introduce legislation. In 2005, after a series of hearings on steroids in sports by various House and Senate committees, several bills were introduced, but all fell by the wayside.

Asked Tuesday why this go-round might be different, Rush said: "There's a different will."

"The purpose of the hearing is to have a serious, open congressional hearing to alert and to allow the American people to really understand that the spectacle of drug abuse, the use of steroids and human growth hormone, is not just confined to one sport, it's a problem in all professional sports, and that the real concern has to center around the effects of this drug epidemic on young people, young athletes, young cheerleaders, young gymnasts, young aspiring football players and basketball players," Rush said. "This is a problem that permeates American sports."

RGA monthly qualifier this Saturday

Refaluwasch Golf Association will hold the qualifier for its March Ace of the Month Tournament this Saturday, March 1, at the Coral Ocean Point Golf Resort.

Check-in time for the competition is 11am with tee off set an hour later at 12pm.

Entry fee is $30 with greens fees at $20. The tournament can accommodate as much as 16 members.

RGA president "emeritus" and current tournament director Jess Wabol reminded the public that that the club has halved its membership dues for 2008 from the long-standing fee of $50 to only $25.

Wabol said this happened after RGA recognized the hard economic times and decided to give its members and future members a break by slashing the cost of becoming part of RGA.

He said he hopes by making membership in RGA a little lighter in the pocket, more weekend warriors will now return to the golf links and renew their membership or apply as new members of the golf club.

Wabol added that RGA is also instituting a new promotion this year wherein members who take part in at least 10 rounds by the time the annual RGA Club Championship in December comes around, will get free entry into the tournament.

The free entry fee used to be for the Turkey Shoot, but RGA changed it so that the November affair remains a fundraiser for the club.

For more information about RGA's upcoming March Ace of the Month Tournament qualifier, new membership policies, and other competitions held by the club, contact RGA president Adam Hardwicke at 483-2926 or Wabol at 233-3673. ***(Mark Rabago)***

Canoe association gets busy

Paddlers will again be busy starting this weekend as they will troop to Kilili Beach Park for training and racing events at the Saipan Lagoon.

On Saturday, the Saipan Outrigger Canoe Association will hold races for the high school division starting at 9am at Kilili Beach Park.

The high schools of Mt. Carmel, Marianas, Saipan Southern, and Kagman will be again contending for the title this year.

The high school racing season started on Feb. 16 with MHS dominating the boys' and girls' 500m and 1,000m races with Kagman and Mt. Carmel finishing second in all events. Mt. Carmel and Saipan Southern rounded up the standings.

After the high school race, SOCC will again start training for the Tinian Crossing scheduled on May 3 and 4.

Organizers are aiming to have at least four canoes that will attempt the crossing this year.

The Tinian Crossing is part of SOCC's training and preparation for the Heineken Cup on Guam where the usual distances of 500m sprint, 1,500m slalom, and long distance will be offered. ***(Jon Perez)***

Sta. Lucia Realtors go for title

MANILA, Philippines—The mouthful should come if Boyet Fernandez and his Sta. Lucia Realtors finish the job Wednesday.

The Sta. Lucia coach has so far chosen his words well up to this point, keeping mum on any predictions as Sta. Lucia tries to finish off Purefoods in Game 6 of the Smart PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum Wednesday.

In a series where memorable battles have been fought off the court as much as off it, the Realtors hope to seize the moment and add a page to its modes franchise history: A first-ever all-Filipino crown.

Sta. Lucia's mission starts at 7 p.m. against a Purefoods squad that is expected to be pumped up by the return of James Yap. The Giants are expected to lay everything on the line to stretch the series into a decider and Yap will lead that crusade.

"Unless the commissioner finds another infraction to slap on James and suspends him again, he will be playing," Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio mockingly said after losing, 88-76, and yielding a crucial 3-2 lead to Sta. Lucia.

Fernandez, who had spoken boldly in his semifinal series against Alaska, going as far as to predict a Realtors victory after taking a similar 3-2 lead.

But so far in the title series, he has resorted to such safe remarks as "no comment" and has even told scribes that he expects a Purefoods fightback.

"Purefoods is a very strong team with a rich tradition," the Bacolod native, also a licensed nurse, said on Sunday. "But we will be ready for them. We will prepare for all the adjustments that they will make."

The main difference between Wednesday night's game and Game 5 that the Realtors have to prepare for is the return of Yap.

Gregorio is expected to ride the 2006 MVP all the way to a knockout match. The Purefoods mentor, however, is expected to check Yap's morale, which has been on a low since being suspended for smacking Sta. Lucia's Joseph Yeo in the nose.

"He (Yap) told me over the phone that he has lost passion for the game, especially after how he was treated by the commissioner," Gregorio said. "But I told him that games are won on the basketball court.

"And that is where he needs to make his statement."

Yap's return automatically injects about 27 points to a Purefoods offense that struggled to find the basket in Game 5. The Realtors, no longer needing to chase down Yap all over the court, found it easy to clamp down on Kerby Raymundo in that decisive encounter. ***(PDI)***

FALCONS

From Page 28

The win was the fourth straight for the Falcons against the Tigers dating back from their three-game sweep in the last year's finals. The Tigers were still known then as the Masters.

The Tigers started out the game with a four-run, first-inning scoring rally before the Falcons' pitching held them to one run each in the second and sixth innings.

Joshua Muna pitched four innings in relief and allowed the Tigers one run on one hit with two strikeouts and three walks, while Hans Pua closed out for the Falcons to help preserve the win.

Jess Taitano started for the Falcons and lasted four innings, giving up three hits on five runs with a strikeout and three walks.

Despite giving up five runs in the first two innings, Taitano settled on the mound and pitched two scoreless innings before being relieved by Muna at the top of the fifth.

Muna had a 1-2-3 inning as soon as he came in but allowed Mabel Ngirngemelas, who walked, to score the lone run for the Tigers in the sixth before blanking their opponents for two more innings.

Pua closed out for the Falcons and slammed the door shut on the Tigers to prevent their opponents from mounting a comeback. He forced Frank Torres to ground out for the first out before Dennis Ngeskebei managed to sneak in a single and later moved to second on a Ton Pangelinan single.

Pua forced Mike Muna to hit a line drive to first baseman B.J. Sablan for the second out and he later walked Jack Diaz to load up the bases.

Tigers' third baseman Ed Santos then came up to face Pua with the hopes of prolonging his team's chances or hitting a grand slam.

Pua's first throw found the strike zone as Santos was caught looking. Santos fouled the second pitch for strike two and struck out when he went out swinging to end the game.

Ned Norita, who had a triple, and Mike Pangelinan combined for 5-for-8 in batting with three runs and four RBIs. J.D. Dikito and Sablan combined for 6-for-10 in batting with the former scoring three runs, while the latter had two RBIs in the Falcons' seven-run, fourth-inning scoring splurge. Jay Camacho went 2-for-3 with two RBIs.

Rock Steady was playing against the Ford Rangers at press time, while today's 6:30pm game will feature the Korean Dreams against Komoro.

KOREAN

From Page 28

will be followed by the Inter Godfather's-Independents match at 2:15pm. The final match at 3:30pm will be between Multinational FC against SongPa FC.

The top two teams after the single-elimination round will play in the finals at 4:45pm with the award ceremony taking place at 6pm.

The champion, runner-up, and third place teams each receive trophies and $200, $150, and $100 cash as prizes.

Individual awards will also be given to the most valuable player, most goals scored, best defender, most improved player, and sportsmanship.

Games will be played with two 30-minute halves with a five-minute halftime break. Each win will earn a team three points while a draw will get them one point. No points will be awarded for a loss.

GOLD-LEVEL

From Page 28

shops, Mulroy had an afternoon session with the athletes for practical application. "Primarily, it is a coach-focus workshops then worked with the swimmers, which is really just much of the implementation of the things that we talked about in the lectures."

Mulroy said the workshops are more on teaching how coaches would support the swimmers' training program. "It is the same thing that we have done in each of the places that I've been."

Mulroy is a veteran coach in Australia and has worked and trained other coaches not only in Perth, but all throughout Oceania. Before coming to Saipan Mulroy also held clinics in Papua New Guinea and Guam.

He leaves for Guam at 3:30pm today then will spend two more days in Palau before going back to Perth, Western Australia.

The City of Perth Swimming Club is Western Australia's oldest swimming club and one of Australia's most successful swimming clubs. Head coach Matt Magee is helping Mulroy.

SAIPAN

From Page 28

The race starts with a 1.5-kilometer swim in the warm and clear waters off Micro Beach. The swim is followed by a 30-km mountain bike ride that winds through the island terrain and to the top of Mount Tapochao—towering 1,545 feet above sea level and is the highest point on the island.

The off-road triathlon concludes with a 12-km trail run that takes athletes through secret jungles and caves.

The entry fees for the XTERRA Saipan Championship is $125 for an individual or $250 for a team plus a $9 one day USA Triathlon license if the participant is not a member.

For XTERRA Sport, the entry fee is $75 for an individual and $150 for a team plus the $9 fee, if applicable.

The divisions that can be participate in are 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-45, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-and-over (women), 60-64 (men), 65-and-over (men), professional, military, and challenged athlete. Teams may be men, women, co-ed, military, and challenged athlete.

The 19th Tagaman Triathlon, meanwhile, will be held a week later on March 15. It is the longest running race in the Western Pacific and draws its name and inspiration from the Taga stone—a unique archeological remnant of the original island people of Saipan.

The course begins at Pacific Islands Club and moves to one of the world's most beautiful bike courses. Cyclists will cover the entire island from north to south and will take in stunning views of Suicide Cliff and Bird Island. Upon returning to Micro Beach, the racers enjoy a flat run course along the western lagoon and through historic American Memorial Park.

Every year athletes come from Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, Philippines, Korea, New Zealand, Guam, Palau, and the USA to participate in these events.

While defending men's champion Olivier Marceau of Switzerland has begged off from this year's XTERRA Saipan, last year's Tagaman winner Andrew Noble of Australia has already signified his intention to take on the off-road race.

Last year's women's division winner Renata Bucher of Switzerland is expected to defend her tiara, while Tagaman women's depending champion Julie Dibens of Great Britain will skip this year's race to attend to her injuries.

Cash prizes are given for both XTERRA Saipan and Tagaman winners. XTERRA Saipan carries a top cash prize of $2,200 and Tagaman carries a top cash prize of $1,200.

This year's sponsors include DFS Galleria, Coca-Cola, Pacific Islands Club and Northwest Airlines.

"This is yet another year of sporting events held in the CNMI," said MVA managing director Perry Tenorio. "MVA wants to thank Taga Inc. for their commitment and efforts in coordinating these events. Our islands do offer a perfect environment for these sporting activities and we are thankful for their support."

Unlike previous years, both races will be organized locally by Taga Inc. after the MVA decided last year to cut its budget for the XTERRA Saipan from $300,000 to around $100,000.

Entry forms for XTERRA Saipan and Tagaman can be obtained from the MVA website: www.mymarianas.com. Those interested can also visit www.tagaman.com or www.xterrajapan.net for more information.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	43	12	.782	_
Toronto	31	24	.564	12
New Jersey	25	32	.439	19
Philadelphia	25	32	.439	19
New York	17	39	.304	26 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	37	22	.627	_
Washington	27	30	.474	9
Atlanta	22	32	.407	12 1/2
Charlotte	19	37	.339	16 1/2
Miami	10	44	.185	24 1/2

Central Division

Detroit	42	15	.737	_
Cleveland	32	25	.561	10
Chicago	22	34	.393	19 1/2
Indiana	22	35	.386	20
Milwaukee	22	35	.386	20

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	38	17	.691	_
New Orleans	37	18	.673	1
Dallas	38	19	.667	1
Houston	37	20	.649	2
Memphis	14	43	.246	25

Northwest Division

Utah	36	21	.632	_
Denver	33	23	.589	2 1/2
Portland	29	28	.509	7
Seattle	15	41	.268	20 1/2
Minnesota	12	43	.218	23

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	40	17	.702	_
Phoenix	39	18	.684	1
Golden State	34	22	.607	5 1/2
Sacramento	26	30	.464	13 1/2
L.A. Clippers	19	35	.352	19 1/2

Yesterday's Games

Miami 107, Sacramento 86
Orlando 102, New Jersey 92
Phoenix 127, Memphis 113
Minnesota 111, Utah 100
Milwaukee 105, Cleveland 102
Houston 94, Washington 69
Golden State 105, Seattle 99
L.A. Lakers 96, Portland 83

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NMASA sports banquet on March 4

Cruz

Ruluked

Minor

Sablan

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

ATHLETES of the YEAR

The Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association is set to reveal the CNMI's best athletes for 2007 when it holds the Annual Sports Banquet this coming Tuesday, March 4, at the poolside of the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

The event will start at 6pm with dinner served at 7pm and the presentation for the 2008 CNMI Sports Hall of Fame Class following shortly.

The athletes of the month will then be presented with certificates where from the 29 nominees will emerge the Male and Female Athletes, and Male and Female Student Athletes of the Year will emerge.

Leading the nominees for the Male Athlete of the Year is Tyrone Omar of athletics, who is a two-time Male Athlete of the Month winner in April and August.

Other Male Athlete of the Month winners and nominees for the Athlete of the Year are athletics' Jack Kabriel (January), swimming's Rezne Wong (February), basketball's Edsel Mendoza (March), badminton's Raj Jayalal (May), baseball's B.J. Sablan (June), basketball's John Sablan (July), bowling's Robert Talavera (September), baseball's Randal Aguon (November), and athletics' Nick Gross (December).

Multiple monthly winners Sarah Johnson of swimming and sprinter Yvonne Bennett are among the top contenders for the Female Athlete of the Year category.

Johnson won back-to-back, in March and April, while Bennett was the lone three-time Female Athlete of the Month winner after being named in May, August, and December.

Other Female Athlete of the Year nominees are athletics' Noriko Jim (January), basketball's Chelsea Ruluked (July), and bowling's Emi Williams (November).

Swimmer Copper Graf and netter Ji Hoon Heo lead the cast in the Male Student Athlete of the Year nominees. Graf won the award in March and September while Heo was named in August and November.

Other nominees for the Male Student Athlete of the Year are January co-winners David Bautista of athletics and baseball's John Mafnas, swimming's Kensuke Kimura (February), tennis' Chris Cajigan (April) and Russell Buenaventura (May), basketball's Manuel Ajoste (July) and Jericho Cruz (December).

Bennett, Johnson, and Ruluked are also nominated in the Female Student Athlete of Year category along with three-time monthly winner Jacque Wonenberg of athletics and two-time awardee Thea Minor of tennis.

Wonenberg was named Athlete of the Month in January, May, and July, while Minor won the August and December monthly crowns.

Other athletes nominated in the same category are Jessica Soll (February) and Emily Jones (November), both from tennis.

Hustlers sweep Barracuda to take lead

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR

SAIPAN BILLIARDS ASSOCIATION

SaipanCell Hustlers assumed the leadership of the Budweiser SBA Open 8-Ball League after scoring a 7-0 sweep of Coral Reef Barracuda Tuesday night at Crystal Perfect Spot.

Entering the fifth week of competition, Hustlers trailed Jonny's Destroyers by a game, 29-7 to 27-8, but quickly made up that deficit by recording the aforementioned 7-0 sweep of the hapless Barracudas to move up to a 34-8 win-loss record.

Robert Sanciango started things off for the Hustlers by winning his singles match against Jon Peter of Barracuda, 2-0.

The victory was a portent of things to come for the Hustlers as Joey Lucido, Erwin Gomez, Jerry Soriano, and Senen Pangilinan won their respective matches against Tito Laniyo, Wizer Masayos, Tyrone Kelele-man, and Steve Mettao via the same 2-0 sweeps.

The first double matches ended in the same fashion, as Gomez and Lucido blanked Masayos and Keleleman, before Mettao and Carl Hocog managed to take one of three games against Sanciangco and Pangilinan in the second doubles match of the evening.

The loss dropped Barracudas record to 9-33 and dead last in the 16-team field of the Budweiser SBA Open 8-Ball League.

In other matches, Jonny's Destroyers (32-1) won four of seven games against Wild Wild West (25-17); Mr. Wonderful Shooters (26-16) won with the same score against Godfather's Magas (17-25); Porky's Wild Hogs (26-16) got the better of Coral Reef Shark Attack in a score of 5-2; Lens 5 Bad Boys (25-17) winning 5-2 over USSP Wat-Ever (14-28); Porky's Extremist (25-17) recording a 5-2 victory over Len's 5 Amigos (11-31); USSP Fotten Palau (23-19) blanking Perfect Spotter (14-28); and Wild Bill's Snipers (18-24) scoring a 6-1 victory over VFW Warriors (13-29).

Pacific Amusement, the same company that runs the leagues of the Saipan Electronic Darts Association, organizes the Budweiser SBA Open 8-Ball League.

For more information about the Budweiser SBA Open 8-Ball League and the SEDA leagues, contact secretary Charlotte Tenepere at 233-4397.

MARK RABAGO
USSP Fotten Palau members pose for a group shot during a lull in their match against Perfect Spotter at USS Peleliu Club last Tuesday night.

Carwash raises $500 for Tsunami Saipan

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan members and their parents pose in front of McDonald's Middle Road following their carwash fundraiser last Sunday.

Members of the Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan were involved in a different kind of aquatic activity last weekend, as they raised funds by offering carwash services in the parking lot of McDonald's Middle Road last Sunday.

"We raised a little over $500 and I think having the kids actually work is much better than having them beg for it," said Tsunami Saipan president Stan Good.

He added that the community of Saipan made the carwash a great success by their purchase of the tickets and by allowing the kids to wash their cars. Good said each car had at least 10 kids working on it and the event was great fun and gave his swimmers a chance to socialize away from the pool.

"The carwash helped the Tsunami Saipan swim team raise money to be used for trips, equipment, and pool fees. One-hundred percent of the funds raised goes back into the club to help the swimmers and to grow our organization," added Good.

He said Tsunami Saipan wishes to extend a sincere thank you to McDonald's Saipan and its owner, Joe Ayuyu, for generously allowing them the use of their parking area and facilities to stage fundraisers for worthwhile community organizations.

"We are very appreciative of McDonald's generous community spirit and the support they lend to sports organizations such as our swim club. The carwash teaches the kids that they are a part of the team success by working together to raise money for the team," said Good.

Tsunami Saipan plans to conduct similar events in the future to raise funds and get the team involved in the effort.

Good said since July of last year, the Tsunami Saipan swim team has increased from four original members to 30 members today.

"After the next series of American Red Cross lessons in April, we hope to add some more members and keep growing," said Tsunami Saipan head coach Kimura. "Again, thank you McDonald's and thank you Saipan."

Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan members are busy washing a car during their carwash fundraiser last Sunday at McDonald's Middle Road.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

NMASA sports banquet on March 4
The Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association is set to reveal CNMI's best athletes for 2007 when it holds the Annual Sports Banquet this coming Tuesday, March 4, at the poolside of the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.
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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Yao out for season with left foot injury
All-Star center Yao Ming is out for the season with a stress fracture in his left foot, a stunning blow to the surging Houston Rockets. General manager Daryl Morey made the announcement Tuesday.
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Falcons rally past Tigers in opener

JON PEREZ
Tanapag Falcons second baseman Dustin Quitano, right, waits for the throw of Tigers pitcher Ben Duenas in the opening game of the 2008 season of the Budweiser-Saipan Major League on Tuesday night at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field.

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

For three-and-a-half innings the Tigers of Atty. Bob O'Connor seemed to have finally solved the enigma that surrounds the YCO Corporation-backed Falcons of Tanapag.

But just like a volcano waiting to explode, the Falcons rallied back from a four-run deficit to score a come-from-behind 13-6 win over the Tigers at the start of the 2008 season of the 3rd Annual Budweiser-Saipan Major League Tuesday night at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field.

Ben Duenas seemed to be the answer that Tigers manager Tony Rogolifoi was looking for against the Falcons as the veteran pitcher limited the Tanapag crew's high-octane offense to one run on three hits with three strikeouts in the first three innings. He even pitched two scoreless innings limiting the Falcons to grounders.

All hell broke loose in the bottom of the fourth when the Falcons made the comeback and tagged Duenas with seven runs on six hits with one walk. The Falcons' rally happened with two outs on the board.

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Korean football team to join President's Cup

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

A Seoul-based Korean football club will be joining this year's President's Cup Football Tournament on Sunday, March 2, at the Oleai Field inside the Susupe Sports Complex.

SongPa FC will be seeing action against six other local squads in the 2008 edition of the Korean Football Association of Saipan-organized football tournament.

KFAS project director Man Ki Doh said SongPa FC was scheduled to visit Saipan this year so they decided to invite them to join the tournament.

Other competing teams are Multinational FC, Onwel, FC Arirang, Freedom Bangla, Inter Godfather's, and Wild Bill's-Independents.

SongPa FC, MFC, Onwel, and Arirang are in Group A while FB, IG, and IS are in Group B.

MFC will open up the one-day tournament at 8am when they go up against powerhouse Onwel with the Group B match between Freedom Bangla and Inter Godfather's following shortly at 9:15am.

At 10:30am, Onwel takes on FC Arirang while Freedom Bangla battles the Independents at 11:45am. The tournament takes a one-hour break.

Games will resume at 1pm with SongPa FC taking on FC Arirang and

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Gold-level swim coach visits Saipan

DAN KIMBALL
Australia gold-level coach Bernie Mulroy, first row center, joins swimmers from the Saipan Swim Club and Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan for a group photo yesterday at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi.

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

A gold-level swimming coach from Australia spent almost two days on Saipan to help swimmers improve their skills and work on their techniques.

Bernie Mulroy, who is the coaching director of the City of Perth Swimming Club in Australia, arrived on Saipan on Monday evening to provide coaches with some support and information that might help them train their swimmers.

He spent Tuesday and Wednesday morning with the coaches of the Saipan Swim Club and Swimming Center Tsunami Saipan. The clinics lasted for more than three hours and were all lecture sessions.

"This is something that has been coordinated by FINA to help provide coaches with some information that might help them in their endeavors," said Mulroy in an interview yesterday.

"The clinics are more about coaching skills and working on different types of programming with the athletes and athlete development. It is more on technique and training."

After the two-day morning work-

See GOLD-LEVEL on Page 26

Saipan braces for 2008 Saipan Sportsfest

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

The biggest sporting event of the year is just around the corner, and the Marianas Visitors Authority is reminding everyone to mark their calendars for March 8 and 15, respectively, when the Saipan Sportsfest again hits town.

The 6th XTERRA Saipan Championship, known as the "crown jewel" of the XTERRA World Tour, is a unique challenge that kicks off on March 8.

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JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ
The "crown jewel" of the XTERRA World Tour–the 6th XTERRA Saipan Championship–kicks off the 2008 Saipan Sportsfest two Saturdays from now on March 8.